PRINCESS PAUPER AND PENITENT

Frank John Stoshock
April 27, 1956
Given by Rev. W. M. Wagnseller

Robert F. Hulen

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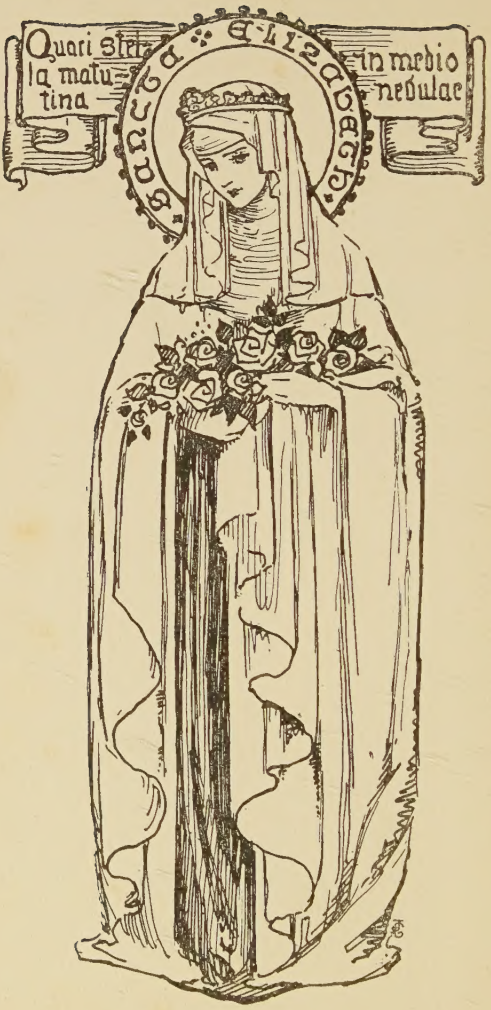
PRINCESS, PAUPER AND PENITENT


Quasi stella matutina
Sancta Elizabeth
in medio nebulae

Written by an Episcopalian Nun
Order of the Poor Clares.

PRINCESS, PAUPER AND PENITENT

The Dear Saint of Holy Church Elizabeth of Hungary (1207-1231)

Ave gemma speciosa,
Mulierum sidus, rosa,
Ex regali stirpe nata
Nunc in coelis coronata;
Salve rosa pietatis,
Salve flos Hungariae,
Salve fulgens margarita,
In coelesti sede sita;
Roga regem Majestatis
Ut nos salvet hodie
Lumen mittens caritatis
Ac coelestis gratiae.

Ancient Office of St. Elizabeth.

GRACE DIEU PRESS
Merrill, Wis., U. S. A.
1926

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The Lakeside Press
R. R. DONNELLEY & SONS COMPANY
CHICAGO

TO three tertiaries of our American Congregation of Franciscans, whose interest, love and generosity has helped to found our Convent—

Sister Francesca, T. S. F.
Sister Catherine, T. S. F.
Sister Agnes, T. S. F.

this little book is lovingly dedicated as a token of friendship, gratitude and spiritual fellowship.

THE ECCLESIASTICAL APPROBATION

THE Holy Rule of St. Francis, to which the writer of this book is bound by her vows, declares that each Franciscan is ever to be "submissive and obedient at the feet of Holy Church," which is the Spouse of Christ and His Mystical Body, the Pillar and Ground of the Truth. The test which every Catholic desires to apply to a given statement to ascertain its truth is just this—is it consonant with God's revelation of eternal truth given us through Holy Church? With this test in view we have a rule that "No friar or nun of our Congregation shall issue any book whatever on any sacred matter without the permission of the superiors of the Order and the further approbation of Ecclesiastical Authority." This is not done by way of certificate of excellence to the book, nor does it commit the superiors or the bishop to its contents except by way of assurance that after examination there has been found in it "nothing contrary to the Catholic Faith, injurious to Christian morals or hurtful to devout living." In other words, it is an attempt to give the faithful some protection against evil books in this heresy-ridden age. This is the extent and the meaning of the formal approbation given below, to this little book. Our Diocesan, Bishop Weller of Fond du Lac, delegated the Dean of his Cathedral Church, the Very Rev. Edward W. Averill, to be his *censor librorum*, and it is upon his *Nihil Obstat* that the Bishop's *imprimatur* is given. Since the book was written as an act of obedience it is plain that it is issued with the permission of our superiors.

Imprimatur.

✠Reginald Fond du Lac.

THE FOREWORD

ST. ELIZABETH OF HUNGARY is one of the most lovable, even as her life was one of the most dramatic of all the saints, and yet there is no biography of hers in English that tells her story in such a way as to commend itself to the viewpoint and sympathies of the modern reader. The best English life is, of course, the translation of Montalembert's work, but to the modern reader this author's over-emphasis on the miraculous and the heroic seems to result in an under-emphasis on the real human charm of our heroine. Our aim has been to tell as simply as possible the story of St. Elizabeth, with a plain statement of both the human and the marvelous, and just enough background of comment and explanation as is necessary to make clear those matters in her life history which puzzle the average modern reader if he is unable to understand the mediaeval point of view.

We unblushingly place on record the fact that we have used Montalembert's book as our chief authority for the historical outline of her life and that we have also drawn on all other sources to which we have had access. But we have not been able to study any of the original documents listed in the appendix to this book. However, this was scarcely necessary since our aim was not to issue a critical or scholarly life of our Saint, but rather to tell her wonderful and romantic story in as clear and interesting a manner as we could.

The only element in our book which could possibly be considered original is this background of

comment and explanation, and the writer wishes to say that even this is not original with her. In a new community such as ours, spiritual conferences on various points connected with Franciscan history and observance are necessarily very frequent, and several priests and religious have been kind enough to give us these. In community recreation also there have often been interesting discussions of such matters. It is from these conferences and discussions that the material which we have called the background of our book has been taken. In other words, it would be perfectly true to say that anything original in this book has for its authorship the wit and learning of several priests and religious and of all the members of our two communities rather than the writer.

It is also our duty to record our obligation to a beautifully written article called, "The Patroness of the Poor," which appeared in the issue of September, 1915, of *The Catholic World* and had for its author Mr. Thomas B. Reilly. This was the source of most of our quotations except the conversations, which are taken from Montalembert's work. We have also quoted at length some passages from our own Constitutions, but modesty has constrained us to omit any indication of the latter in the text.

Furthermore, we are indebted to a religious of the Community of St. Mary for the exquisite pen-sketch of St. Elizabeth which we have been privileged to use as a frontispiece, and to her and her community we render our grateful thanks. Mr. Ralph Meade of Merrill, Wisconsin, and one of our tertiaries, Sister Mary Thecla, made the designs for the cover of our book, and to them also our thanks are due.

Public recognition should likewise be given to

Father Joseph, O. S. F., for constant direction and oversight in preparing the manuscript, and to Father Juniper Michael, T. S. F., for helpfulness in editing it.

We wish to conclude this foreword by saying something which we hope will be obvious to every reader of this book. Each word written in it was meant to be one of honour and love both to God and His saints, and if anything of dishonour to Either be found herein we would wish to withdraw it at once. Blessed be God in His angels and in His saints!

The Feast of St. Elizabeth of Hungary,
November 19, 1925.

THIS EDITION IS
LIMITED TO
TWO THOUSAND COPIES,
OF WHICH THIS IS
NO. 1187

IN the Name of our Saviour Jesu Christ here begins this little book of the life of His holy princess, pauper and penitent, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, the Dear Saint of Holy Church:

I. Elizabeth, the Theme of Romance.
II. Elizabeth, the Princess of Hungary.
III. Elizabeth, the Wife of Louis.
IV. Elizabeth, the Duchess of Thuringia.
V. Elizabeth, the Patroness of the Poor.
VI. Elizabeth, the Pauper of Eisenach.
VII. Elizabeth, the Penitent of Marburg.
VIII. Elizabeth, the Daughter of Francis.
IX. Elizabeth, the Saint of God.
X. Elizabeth, the Companion of the Heavenly Citizens.

Written under obedience by a Minoress of Blessed Sacrament Convent, Merrill, Wisconsin.

PRINCESS, PAUPER AND PENITENT

I

ELIZABETH, THE THEME OF ROMANCE

I have made thee a great name, like unto the name of great men that are in the earth. II Sam. 7, 9. Like as the morning star in the midst of a cloud. Ecclus. 50, 6.

Woe to the writers that write grievousness, to take away the right from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey. Isa. 10, 1, 2.

1

THERE are stories of war and stories of love. There are tales of chivalry and adventure. And the world is happier because of them even though it sometimes wearies of their telling. But there is one so full of all that is lovely, so naive and human, so sweet and tender, that it teases to be told again and again, and that is the story of Elizabeth, the Princess Saint of Hungary, the darling of all

who knew her, whom Catholics have been wont to call "the Dear Saint." Affianced at four, a wife at fourteen, at sixteen a mother, a widow at twenty and a saint at twenty-four! Was there ever a story quite like this? Certainly none is more dramatic, more full of noble deeds, great adventures, sharp reverses, romantic affection for her lover and husband and heroic charity towards God and man. We live vigorously in this age but few can claim such a record as hers. She lived a short time but fulfilled a long time. She was reared in luxury but chose to live blissfully in poverty and to die bravely and happily amidst great suffering. No other story so grips the imagination because of its colour and beauty or so tears the heartstrings with its tenderness and pathos. Surely the saints were a vigorous red-blooded race, and they knew and put into practice all that there is for us to know about life.

All down the ages people have found comfort and inspiration in repeating the story of Elizabeth. They have told it to their children and retold it to their grandchildren. They have named churches and hospitals after her to keep her memory fresh. They have painted pictures of her and sung hymns in her honour. They have founded Religious Communities

dedicated to her and living under her rule of life. And there grows in certain parts of Germany a little flower so sweet that the people have given it the name "dear St. Elizabeth's Flowret" (*Cystus Helianthemum*).

Who will count it strange that a story so dramatic in its mere facts should have become a theme of romance about which human imagination has woven an embroidery of beautiful fancies? It would be strange otherwise. And it is not for us to separate the embroidery from the home-spun. To do so would be to ruin both. Some day the sources may be studied and a more critical life of our heroine written. At our disposal there have been no original documents or sources, and it is best thus. These are for scholars and authors, unsuitable to such an one as is writing this little book. Our purpose is to give to any who care to read these pages, more especially to those whom we know to be interested in our revival of the Franciscan life amongst Anglicans, an account of the Patroness of the Third Order of St. Francis which will make her live to them as the fruitful example, the charming friend, and the loving advocate we all know her to be. Several English lives of her exist but those which we have read are so full of honey and contain so little real bread and butter that they soon weary the

delicate modern palate. Herein we have tried to combine sweetness for our hearts without neglect of real food for thought. In a word, we have written not to prove or disprove anything, but to improve ourselves. And we have been careful not to adopt the supercilious tone so usual in these days when the supernatural is written about. God knows, our age has nothing of which to boast over that of St. Elizabeth's, and certainly none of us have her nearness to God, so who are we to inveigh against her and hers just because they happen not to meet the fickle fancy of modern men and women? We may be very sophisticated in all that pertains to pleasure and luxury but we know little about saints and the ways of God, and it does not behove us to sit in judgment on them.

Moreover, the very fact that St. Elizabeth has undergone something of an apotheosis shows what an impression she made upon her generation. Her legend may be full of fancies as well as facts. But we all know, do we not, that the mere telling of facts never gives an adequate impression of truth. That is why poetry expresses more truth than the same amount of prose. You may not feel the greatness of Elizabeth nor taste the real flavor of her beautiful life if you are the sort of person who is incapable of seeing the eternal truth

that may be enshrined in what we are pleased to term "mere legend."

2

A whisper of romance is heard at the very birth of Elizabeth. It comes to us not from Hungary but from a land far distant. In the principality of Thuringia, the landgrave, Hermann I, one of the most powerful and wealthy nobles of Germany, lived in a great fortress-like chateau magnificently situated on top of the precipitous heights overlooking his capital city, Eisenach. This fortified palace was named from the hill on which it is built, "the Wartburg," a place which throughout the centuries has been the scene of many important historical events. For example, it was here in a later age that Luther, under the assumed name of Junker Jörg, found a welcome and refuge in the beginning of the evil which he wrought upon the Church. It was here that he completed his translation of the New Testament. Here also he is said to have had his interview with the devil when he threw his ink-pot at him and made a great blot on the wall—a blot which, so we are told, has been reduced to a mere hole in the wall by the passion of American tourists for souvenirs. Furthermore, this is the castle which was immortalized by Wag-

ner's *Tannhäuser*, though he exercised poetic license to the full and, among other changes, made the famous minstrels' contest to take place during St. Elizabeth's residence there instead of previous to her birth.

Duke Hermann, who was largely responsible for this *sängerkrieg*, was a good man. He never retired to rest without first having read or heard a lesson from Holy Scripture. His rule as landgrave was distinguished by generosity, piety and learning. In his youth he had studied at Paris and he was always a patron of the liberal arts, especially poetry. His court was naturally a boisterous one, for to it streamed minstrels and "wandering folk" of all descriptions.

The war of song took place on this wise. In 1206 there assembled at the Wartburg six of the most renowned poets of Germany. Five of these were of gentle birth, but one was not. Their rivalry for fame and name was most keen. The five gentlemen showed their gentility by striving to put their social inferior to death, and he took refuge with the Duchess Sophia, the wife of Hermann, who by hiding him under her mantle managed to keep him safe until her husband returned from the hunting party on which he had been absent.

To put an end to their differences they

agreed to a public and final contest before the Duke and his court. An executioner was to be present, rope in hand, and was to hang in the sight of all him whose verses were declared to be inferior to those of his rivals. A great crowd of knights and gentry assembled, to whom the combatants sang by turn. Their songs have been preserved under the title of "The War of the Wartburg." They are a wonderful collection of poems about diverse subjects, such as the inexhaustible mercy of God, the wondrous marriage of the body with the soul at the resurrection, the glory of Mary who is fairer than the moon and as clear as the sun, the fame of princely deeds and the like, and they still form an important cycle in Germanic literature. But all six bards sang such exquisite poems that no one could decide who was the greatest. Hence a truce was declared for a year, and the renowned Klingsohr of Hungary, one of the most cultured and learned men of his day, was invited to Eisenach to settle the dispute.

A year later, in 1207, he arrived at the ducal court. Here some of the nobles had their curiosity aroused by seeing him one night in deep study of the stars. Then as always the human heart loved the mysterious and sought for signs and portents. "Tell us

a new secret," they said! And he answered them gravely and solemnly, saying that he would tell them something both new and joyous. While they were gazing upward at the stars, said he, another star was rising in Hungary, his home-land, and this star which had only just begun to shine, though as yet invisible to them, would some day send out its rays to Marburg in Thuringia, and from Marburg all over the world. Then he added: "Know that even on this night there is born to my lord, the king of Hungary, a daughter who will be named Elizabeth, and will be given in marriage to the son of your Duke, and will become a saint, and her sanctity will rejoice and console all Christendom."

Klingsohr was considered to be one of the most remarkable men of his age, perhaps almost a wizard, certainly an astrologer. It is possible that he had previously discussed the destiny of this child with his lord, King Andrew; but at any rate Holy Scripture shows us that God has often given a presage of the future at the birth of some great servant of His, and it was at least fitting, and in consonance with what we know of His dealings with men, if He marked with a prodigy the birth of one who always afterwards so generously gave herself to be His very Own.

We do not need to judge of the truth of the various legends of our princess-saint. Certainly there is much more truth in the world than is believed by men. For we are prone to believe evil in all things and we love to show our strength of mind by refusing to believe the miraculous stories of those who have walked with God. So let us commend to ourselves some of these stories by calling them "Catholic fairy tales." And where will you find a sweeter fairy-story than the legend of the roses?

During Elizabeth's married life one of her greatest pleasures was to carry food and delicacies to the sick poor. For humility's sake she always employed as much secrecy as possible and so herself carried the heaviest portions. One day, laden with gifts and accompanied only by a favorite maidservant, as she was descending a steep hill down a rough and unfrequented path, she suddenly encountered her husband, returning in splendor with his royal retinue from a hunting party. Duke Louis was very much annoyed at seeing his delicate wife toiling under so heavy a burden, and at once demanded to see what she carried. He was even a bit cross and drew back her mantle to see for himself. But God rebuked him, for to his great surprise beneath it were

only roses, red and white, the most beautiful he had ever seen, and it was long past the season of flowers. Others add that as he glanced shamefacedly at the radiant face of Elizabeth, there suddenly appeared a new wonder. Over her head shone out brightly the form of a luminous crucifix. Louis humbly begged her to continue her route undisturbed, and returned to the castle with a rose in his hand meditating thoughtfully on the graces which God had made manifest in his holy wife. It is said that he preserved the wonderful rose as long as he lived, and we should have thought he would.

This theme of God protecting the almsgiver from the opposition of the thoughtless has been so beloved and has lingered so in the memory of simple folk that it has attached itself also to the story of St. Elizabeth of Portugal, St. Rose of Viterbo and those of several other saints.

Another popular tradition in the life of our Saint is that of the unbroken toys. Although this story is not so well known as that of the roses, it is no less appealing to all of us who love children and the simpler joys of the heart. Elizabeth, like our Lord, loved children. The dirtier, the homelier, the more unlovable they were and the more they needed love, the more

she loved them. In one of the hospitals which she established she set apart a ward for little orphans and treated them as her own little ones. Whenever she came to visit them they ran out to meet her and clung to her garments, calling her "mother." Very often she brought them little gifts. One day while she was in the city she obtained some gayly-coloured glass toys and earthen dishes for them. On returning home up the rocky heights to the castle her carriage was overturned and Elizabeth, with the toys in her arms, was flung a distance onto a heap of stones. Yet she was unhurt, and when she finally reached the hospital and opened her bundles, to the great surprise of everyone who had been with her, so were the toys. Elizabeth parcelled them out as though nothing at all unusual had happened and then joined with little folks in making merry, but her companions said that God Who Himself had been a little child and Who loves the childlike and lowly of heart, had protected Elizabeth and the toys of her children.

A third miraculous incident usually recorded in any sketch of St. Elizabeth is the tale of the lost mantle. It happened during the wedding feast of Duke Louis' sister, the beautiful Lady Agnes. When all the guests were gathered and ready to enter the great

banquet hall for the final dinner they discovered that the Duchess Elizabeth was missing. They all declared that they would not begin without her. In the meantime, as Elizabeth was ascending the stairs to the banquet hall she saw a poor sick man, almost naked, lying exhausted on the floor. As she attempted to pass him he feebly tried to beg an alms in the name of the Poor Christ and of His Beloved Disciple, St. John. This Apostle was Elizabeth's patron saint, for whom she had a great love. She could never bring herself to refuse an alms asked in his name. But she had no food or even money with her, and time was too pressing to go to seek them, even though she could not resist the pleading. Yielding to a sudden impulse, she took off her costly silken mantle and threw it over his shoulders. Now it was entirely contrary to the custom of the day for a lady to enter the banquet hall without a mantle, and there was nothing for her to do but to return to her own chamber. The seneschal on the stairway saw all that passed and went at once posthaste to the Duke with this choice morsel of shocking inconsiderateness.

"Decide, my lord," he concluded, "if what our most dear lady the Duchess has done is right. While so many nobles are here waiting for her, she is occupied with the poor and has

even now given her mantle to a beggarman."

The good duke looked troubled. "I will go and see what this means," he answered. Excusing himself to his guests he went directly to his wife's chamber. "Beloved Elizabeth, wilt thou not come and dine with us? We should have been at the table long ago if we had not waited for thee."

"I am quite ready to do all that thou willest, my lord," she answered.

"Then where is thy mantle?"

"I have given it away, but if it is pleasing to thee I will go as I am."

At these words one of her waiting maids interrupted her. "Madam," she said, "when coming here I saw your mantle hanging in its place in the wardrobe. I will go and bring it to you." She returned immediately with the very same glittering and precious mantle which the man had taken away. So it was that Elizabeth went to the feast with her husband after all, and her people loved to think that it was an angel who brought back the mantle, and that it was Christ Himself who stood before her as the poor man seeking from her an act of love and unselfishness, thus to make her in moments of amusement and pleasure His very Own just as she was in moments of prayer and devotion.

3

After reading these delightful bits do you wonder that Elizabeth has been such a favorite subject in art? Sculptors and painters both have delighted to portray her. Holbein has painted an exquisite portrait of her in the act of giving clothing to a crippled child. Fra Angelico has chosen to depict her with her arms full of roses. At the church dedicated to her in Marburg, *Die Elizabethenkirche*, which was erected after her death to be her shrine, there is an unusual wooden statue representing her crowned and holding in her hand a miniature church. Almost every notable incident in her life is reproduced in some form or other in this church. There are carvings of the various scenes, such as the giving of the mantle to the beggarman, the nursing of the leper in her husband's bed, the last embrace of her husband as he started for the crusades, the leading forth of her little children homeless from the castle which would no longer tolerate her presence, the reception of the religious habit of the Third Order of St. Francis, the freshness and beauty of her face and figure in the sweet sleep of death, and a remarkable fresco of her coronation in heaven.

Roses, loaves of bread and a double or triple crown are the emblems peculiar to St.

Elizabeth. The double crown reminds us of that earthly crown she so gladly cast away that she might receive a better crown from our Lord; and the triple crown speaks of the triple form of consecration to God, as a wife, a widow and a religious. The roses of course refer to the legend just related, and also to the freshness and sweet simplicity of her character. The bread typifies her boundless generosity in almsgiving and her title "Patroness of the Poor."

4

While these men have been honouring Elizabeth with the brush and chisel, others have been spreading her praises with pen and print. For seven hundred years she has furnished the chief character for innumerable mystery plays, poems, books and the like. Most of these have been written in French or German and have never been translated into English, which accounts for the comparative lack of material at hand in our own tongue.

Of biographies, the French panegyric of Montalembert has been done into English and is the best known life written from a sympathetic and Catholic point of view. But his exuberant style makes it poor English reading.

An account of her life well known a gen-

eration ago to Church people in general and English people in particular is the poetic drama, called "Saint's Tragedy," by a priest of the Church, the Rev. Charles Kingsley.

This good and great man, though a Catholic priest in fact, was as we all know, most anti-Catholic in thought, speech and action. Some poets distort their facts in the interests of beauty, but here is a poet who has taken the facts of an exquisitely beautiful life and written them over to suit his preconceived idea of a mediaeval saint, so as to make ugly and unattractive to us an era and a religion which he despised. He despised because he could not understand, and he could not understand because he would not lay aside his prejudices. What sin is greater than prejudice against Catholic truth? For prejudice is pre-judgment out of the pride and arrogance of a judge who considers himself too much above and beyond the subject under judgment to need enlightenment and to take the trouble to inform himself. Prejudice personified in the persons of Pilate, Herod and the high priests crucified Truth Incarnate, and prejudice crucifies afresh in each age the Son of God in His mystical Body the Church. Prejudice has always been a besetting sin of good people. The very consciousness of zeal for God sometimes blinds

them to the fact that their zeal is not according to knowledge. It is certainly unfortunate that the first account in English of St. Elizabeth's life from the pen of a non-Roman writer should have been by a Church of England priest who was justly revered for his goodness but so prejudiced against Catholicism that it was not possible for him to be sympathetic or fair.

True, the preface to Saint's Tragedy, written by the Rev. John Frederick Denison Maurice, says: "A person who had not an enthusiastic admiration for the character of Elizabeth would not be worthy to speak of her." Undoubtedly Kingsley did admire his heroine, but he admired her in spite of, and not because of, her humility, blind obedience, charity for the poor, and loyalty to the Church. This is proved by his cutting criticisms of her in these four respects.

Kingsley's purpose in writing the drama seems to have been twofold. First he depicts what he claims is the "true story of St. Elizabeth," or in other words a story reduced to terms agreeable to the Protestant mind. Secondly, he presents an exaggerated picture of the Church of the thirteenth century, attacking in particular the celibacy of the priesthood. He claims that, to the Catholic, human love is

merely Heaven's indulgence to fallen man and quite inconsistent with true or divine love, while to the Protestant the highest form of love is represented by the ideal of family ties. Whereas history shows that it is the Protestant, not the Catholic, who has destroyed the sacredness of the same family ties through the divorce courts, while the Catholic has ever reverenced marriage as a sacramental state of life instituted in the time of man's innocence before ever sin entered the world.

Acting on his theory, Kingsley distorts Elizabeth's struggles against self-love into hysteric attempts to bring herself to hate her husband and little children. He makes her bewail her marriage, since he claims virginity is the only state honoured by the Church.

St. Elizabeth's extraordinary charity is best displayed in her care of the poor and her love of almsgiving. Kingsley, taking the modern attitude which looks only to the benefit rendered the poor by alms, describes Elizabeth's almsgiving as fanatic and extravagant, quotes examples of how she was imposed on through her lack of judgment, as if that were a thing which happened to no one except mediaeval Catholics. He seems to forget that in the thirteenth century the motive of almsgiving was not philanthropy, as it is apt to be now,

but the attempt to fulfill our Lord's precept of almsgiving. Naturally, in those days the value of almsgiving was measured more in terms of spiritual value to the giver than in terms of physical value to the receiver. But in any event Elizabeth was by nature a giver. She had to give. The excess of her love both to God and man made giving a necessity. It was the very law of her being. And it was this that made her great. We cannot conceive of her being content with making a yearly subscription to a Community Chest, and leaving to others the joy of ministering to human need.

Kingsley also claims that Conrad, her brutal and unreasonable spiritual director, represents the true spirit of the Church. Accordingly the blame for the extraordinary penances imposed on Elizabeth he lays on the Church and not on Conrad, whose personal faulty asceticism originated them. Conrad can never be considered a fair representative of the priesthood and his methods are condemned by every ascetic theologian of the Church.

Because of the well-drawn characters and realistic conversations, Kingsley's poem has an interest not found in a more prosaic life of St. Elizabeth. The scenes of her persecutions could hardly be made more affecting. Yet she is represented as so morbid and inhuman

that the sympathies of the reader are against his impractical heroine rather than with her. If it were possible to display the beauties of some rare gem by taking it from its proper setting and throwing it in a puddle, then good Father Kingsley's puddle of misunderstanding may be said to furnish a suitable background for the story of St. Elizabeth.

The real St. Elizabeth was not at all the typical, churchwindow type of saint. She was a person of flesh and blood with all the passions and infirmities of the human heart, and she subdued these frailties by a persevering courage and a constant hardihood which would do credit to the spirit of a great soldier. She was not a visionary neurasthenic. She was an heroic soul, full of weakness at first, it is true, but one who loved well and wisely, lived heroically and nobly, gave of her wealth and of herself lavishly, accomplished in her own soul and in others a magnificent work for God, and died joyfully in the hope of a blessed eternity. Her girlish romance with Louis is an exquisite idyll; her dereliction in widowhood and poverty is one of the world's great tragedies; and her courage and sweetness under adversity and persecution and her mighty accomplishments in sanctity and charity are nothing less than epic.

II

ELIZABETH, THE PRINCESS OF HUNGARY

The King's daughter is all glorious within. Ps. 45:13.

God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty. I Cor. 1:27.

1

THE birth of Elizabeth and the just-mentioned events consequent thereupon took place in the year of our salvation 1207. As her birth was foretold by interesting auguries, so it was also followed by great blessings. Very marked was the fact that immediately upon her birth the wars ceased in which Hungary was involved, and peace-time brought to family life that freedom from disquietude and that happiness of re-union which is felt by those who have gone through the death-agonies of war to be almost a fore-taste of the joys of heaven itself. Many remarked upon the coincidence of the birth of little Princess Elizabeth with this sudden influx of peace and pros-

perity. Hungarians loved to say that never before did a royal babe bring so many blessings to her country.

In her babyhood it was noted that names associated with religion were the first sounds to attract her attention. Naturally these were also the first words which she uttered. Everyone stands entranced in the presence of the unfolding of the tiny mind of a baby. We all know the joys of parents over the first intelligible words of their child. In that patriarchal realm and age the whole kingdom doubtless took the same family delight in Elizabeth's babyhood and baby speech. It was a marvel and a joy to them that sacred words such as "Jesus" and "Mary" came natural to her lisping tongue, and it shows of course the piety of her parents and attendants from whom she learned them. For Elizabeth came of a family of saints.

From her cradle she was surrounded with all the robust piety of the thirteenth century. King Andrew was equally famous for his bravery in war and his generosity to the Church and the poor. Elizabeth's mother Gertrude traced her ancestry directly back to Charlemagne, hence we should expect her to have been as she was, not only noble in birth but also in courage, faith, and charity. Ger-

trude's sister became the celebrated St. Hedwig, Duchess of Poland. The House of Hungary has surpassed all the royal races of Europe by numbering three canonized saints among its kings, St. Stephen, St. Emeric and St. Ladislaus. Nor did the piety of Elizabeth's line cease when it came to fruitage in her. The latter's daughter, Gertrude, ranks among the blessed in the Kalendar of the Benedictines. A niece of St. Elizabeth is popularly known as Blessed Margaret of Hungary. Another niece, Cunegunda, is one of the *beatæ* of the Poor Clares. A sister of St. Elizabeth became the grandmother of St. Elizabeth of Portugal. And many other of the Dear Saint's near kinsfolk and descendants, as we shall see later, died in the odour of sanctity. Hers was a great and illustrious family. They were illustrious because of their worldly accomplishments. But far greater than any claim to earthly greatness is the fact that so many of them made their citizenship in the Kingdom of Heaven the means of a career of adventure and sanctity for God during this earthly life which offered them every temptation to pleasure and selfishness.

Elizabeth certainly was a soul that very early in life came to know and to choose the good, the beautiful and the true. Her teachers

testify how wonderfully she understood the rudiments of the faith as a child. Though we should expect this since our Lord Himself declared that the heart of a child was near to God and the things of God, and that men and women can be Godlike only by being childlike, and it is a general experience that children take naturally to the Catholic religion. This is probably of divine ordinance so that the child may very early in life be rooted and grounded in God, and that the first onset of adolescent temptations may only strengthen and prove what is already thoroughly established.

Her contemporary biographers tell of many early demonstrations of piety. Aside from the fact that the first words she uttered were of prayer and that she wonderfully understood as a child the rudiments of the Faith, we are told that at the age of three she began her life-long habit of giving alms to the poor. She showed her compassion for them by giving her toys and garments to those less fortunate than herself. Who can help but be astonished and even a little amused at this pious precocity?

2

It is the fashion nowadays to laugh at youthful piety. The artificialities of our burden-

some civilization have made us self-conscious about everything personal except perhaps the more respectable forms of sin. We follow Luther's advice and sin bravely. But we do not repent bravely or pray bravely as was the way with the brave saints and sinners of an earlier and simpler day. We are not astonished at the sight of sin flaunted in the face of the world. It is too common a sight. But we would think it strange to see any public demonstration of penance beyond a mere utilitarian restitution where such was due. In a more robust age than ours people were less self-conscious about everything, religion included. This explains much in Elizabeth's career of sanctity both as child and woman. In her time people did not so easily suspect as now that a youthful display of piety came from an unhealthy mind. They knew nothing about "nerves" or morbidity because in such a healthy-minded age these were almost non-existent. People did not think it necessary to pretend to be less religious than they were, nor on the other hand to pretend, as the Anglo-Saxon so often has tried to do, that certain sins do not exist when they are merely compelled by our system of taboo to exist in secret. In such an age piety and sin were both taken for granted as normal to fallen man, and people

did not fret over youthful piety. If they were pious folk they delighted in it. If it did not last, so much the worse. If it did last, so much the better. But while it was there they loved it.

The Sacred Scriptures tell us of extraordinary manifestations of a sense of God in the babyhood of blessed Samuel and St. John Baptist. The lives of the saints furnish many parallels. Perhaps some persons have more of a genius for religion than others—special capacities for prayer, faith and sacrifice—though God teaches us plainly that all mankind has some capacity for the things of God. Heart-hunger is never satisfied in any human being until God is adequately known and loved.

Moreover the sanctity of each saint is a unique and individual thing. The lives of some were plain, ordinary, commonplace, like the great St. Joseph of Nazareth, and as such they seldom encounter the extraordinary or dramatic in their own experience. The lives of others are noble dramas, full of the extraordinary as well as of the commonplace, like our own Dear Saint who began even in the cradle to be a saint. And for her early goodness surely her good parents were responsible.

"Hast thou Children? Instruct them." So says Ecclesiasticus. Untrue to the teaching of

Christ and to psychology is the refusal to instruct children in religion on the grounds that they must be left to choose their own faith for themselves. Such an idea springs from that skepticism which underlies all modern philosophy beginning with Descartes, and which makes us doubt the objectivity of truth. If there is no way of being sure of the truth then certainly the choice of which guess at the truth one should make is best left until our powers of guessing have been sharpened by contact with the shrewd ways of the world. But the Catholic, contrariwise, bases his whole religious system on the idea that through the Church a complete and final revelation of all the truth necessary to salvation and perfection has been given to us. It is "the Faith once for all delivered." It cannot be added to or subtracted from. And the problem of the Church in each age is to keep the Deposit of Faith whole and entire, for the world loves it not, and would rather have half-truths than whole truths. Today it will condemn invocation of Saints while tomorrow it will crowd to spiritistic seances.

With one hand it persecutes the Catholic for belief in sacramental healing while with the other it welcomes any extravagance of "Christian Science."

3

We have made this digression to recall to our readers something of the contrast between our age and Elizabeth's, and something also of that eternal contrast between the world and the Church which we shall see so often in her life. We shall never understand much that is beautiful about her if we adopt the superior air that often characterizes the modern consideration of the Catholic past. God has put us in the present, and it is good to be here. We probably would find ourselves unhappy in any other age because God made us for this, and it is our privilege to be trusted by Him to meet the difficulties of our time in the power of the eternal Faith and grace. But this does not excuse a superficial disapproval of all the Catholic past which happens not to be in tune with our very un-Christian present.

Then, as now, the Church existed to make saints. Then, as now, she made them. Our point is to see how she made Elizabeth a saint that we may admire and, when possible, imitate. Families of saints are doubtless rarer now than then. In the past, before the sad break-up of the family which has resulted from disbelief in marriage as a Sacrament, the Catholic home was a novitiate in holiness. This explains why Religious Orders flourished.

Disciplined piety was practised corporately in the home in a way which we moderns cannot even imagine, and the step from such an ordered, obedient life to the discipline of the cloister was not as far a step as now. Many these days who have never obeyed or lived by rule feel a vocation to religion but cannot adjust themselves to a life for which their previous experience has been so poor a preparation. Is it to be wondered at that our Religious Communities grow slowly? The wonder is that they grow at all.

One modern parallel presents itself to this happy mediaeval condition—sons of the clergy. "Ministers' sons" are proverbially bad. But history shows that much of the moral greatness of the British Empire has been due to the sons of her clergy. The hard discipline of the hundreds of obscure vicarages has produced hundreds of empire builders.

As we know, the Church of England has for long been practically dominated by a Protestantism which is foreign to her true character. Since the genius of Protestantism has been for material rather than for spiritual development, these men were moulded into adventurers and builders for the empire of this world. It seems plain that a similar disciplined uprearing of children along Catholic lines will

tend to make men into adventurers and builders for the spiritual realm. Think of a family like that of St. Therese of Lisieux where the father and mother united themselves to each other in marriage, with the avowed purpose of bringing into existence a family dedicated to God, and were so astonishingly successful in doing it!

One great evil, which Holy Church has a right to expect Franciscans to set their faces against, is the desecration of the family life by divorce and secularity. Every married tertiary has a challenge and an inspiration in the home-life of baby Elizabeth. This is what all Christian home-life may be. And her babyhood shows us how God can bless such homes. A babyhood like this could never have come from a home broken by divorce or cursed with worldliness!

Many such wondrous children might be given to God and His Church today if men and women thought less of their own convenience and sinful passions and more of what is due to the home life. Marriage was not instituted by God to make people happy but to make them better. We are more often made better through self-denial than through self-gratification. No home is holy and no marriage can be kept sacred except the basic principle is

love in the form of self-sacrifice rather than in the form of self-seeking. This is assuredly the principle that made a holy home in which the holy babyhood of Elizabeth flourished. It was ever the dominating principle of her own personal life and of course of her married life after she was wedded.

4

Far away in Thuringia in the land of Germany, Duke Hermann, who never forgot the beautiful prophecy that had been made to him by Klingsohr on the night of the young Princess' birth, had pondered and spoken much concerning Elizabeth. Each new traveler from Hungary brought new tales of the beauty, gentleness and popularity of the babe, of her prayerfulness beyond her years, her charity to the poor and the promise she gave of being an extraordinary woman. After four years he resolved to wait no longer but to ask at once for the hand of Elizabeth in the name of his eleven year old son Louis. The ambassadors whom he sent on this mission were of the highest rank. At their head was his cupbearer, Lord Walter de Varila, together with the noble Bertha of Beindeleben and other lords and ladies. These carried with them many princely gifts.

Now there can be no doubt that King Andrew and Queen Gertrude dearly loved their little daughter. The unusual signs of a noble heart and religious mind which she had already manifested, made them prize her all the more. But theirs was not a selfish love. According to the conception of their state of life which the Church had taught them, the vocation of a royal person was to spend and be spent in the honour of the country over which the family exercised rule. Here was a girl-baby who must some day marry and carry on the fortunes of the house. She must secure, at the price of her own person, the unity, peace, and prosperity of her own nation with that of the country into which she was married. *Noblesse oblige.* Ideas of duty ruled every rank of society. The person must sink his own desires in the good of the whole. "Self-expression," which is just an abbreviation for selfish-expression, was not in those days defended as now. There was no divine right of the individual even among those who believed in the divine right of kings.

Therefore when the opportunity came to the royal family of Hungary to make an alliance with the ducal house of Thuringia, it was not to be lightly cast aside. Doubtless it took a good deal of persuasion before the king agreed

to part with his tiny Elizabeth. His counsellors told him again and again of the riches and power of Duke Hermann; of his fertile lands; of the culture of the Thuringian court; how poetry was held in the highest esteem,—a fact which in our own times would seem a strange recommendation from one capitalist or soldier to another; but above all, of the high personal character of the Duke and of Louis, his son and heir. At last King Andrew and Queen Gertrude were brought to see that this was indeed a match quite worthy of their daughter, and one that promised well for her own happiness and the good of the Kingdom, and so they consented to her betrothal to Louis. A brilliant fete was celebrated in her honour lasting with its games, dances and music all of three days; and then preparations were made for sending their little daughter to her new home in Thuringia.

To us at first it may seem cruel that a four year old girl should be taken from her mother and sent to live in a far country among foreign people. Nevertheless it was quite the common custom of the Middle Ages for those who were betrothed to be brought up together, and the result invariably proved the wisdom of it. Surely it was better than the trial marriage proposed by a more enlightened age, and cer-

tainly it was not then found necessary to equalize the chances of wedded happiness and unhappiness by divorce laws. So the little Elizabeth was laid in the wonderful silver cradle which her father had given her and covered with a silken robe embroidered with gold, and then he transferred her to the care of Lord de Varila, saying: "I confide to thy knightly honour my sweetest consolation."

"And I will willingly take charge of her and shall always be her faithful servant," was the knight's reply, a pledge which he and his son amply fulfilled.

A train of twelve of the fairest Hungarian maidens were chosen to accompany the princess, and a magnificent wardrobe was provided for her. The embassy had arrived in but two carriages, but their baggage was so increased by the gifts which the Hungarians showered on them that thirteen were necessary to transport them and the tiny Elizabeth's maids-of-honour back to Thuringia. The dower which the king sent along with his daughter was composed of presents of such immense value as had never before been seen in Thuringia, so precious and beautiful were they, some being secured by Andrew from Constantinople.

As soon as Duke Henry and the Duchess Sophia received news of the approach of the

ambassadors and of the success of the mission, they descended from the Wartburg to Eisenach to greet the returning embassage. There they took the little Elizabeth in their arms and thanked God for having granted her to them. Then they conducted the baby bride to the castle. Here in the presence of the assembled court she was solemnly affianced to the little Louis. During the imposing ceremonies of the betrothal, according to the custom, the two little children were laid side by side in the same cradle. Far from showing any dislike or fear, they greeted each other with smiles and played with each other. It was love at first sight! After this omen of a happy marriage, as everyone regarded it, they were rocked to sleep together just as they lay. For the adults much sumptuous banqueting and gay merrymaking followed, in which poetry as usual received first honour. The court chronicles say that the joy of having received the Princess of Hungary as their future Duchess almost turned their senses awry.

5

Elizabeth was such a sweet child that she soon endeared herself to all in Thuringia. The Duke learned to love her as his own daughter. He chose seven of the noblest maidens of her

own age to be her companions, among whom was his daughter Agnes. Another maid by the name of Guta remained faithful in Elizabeth's service until she was forcibly torn from her mistress shortly before Elizabeth's death. But Louis, he whom she called her dear brother, was ever nearest and dearest to her heart.

The court of Thuringia was not so devout a place as Hungary, and the premature piety of Elizabeth might have been expected to disappear in these surroundings, but when she was six years old the terrible news was brought to Thuringia that her mother, Queen Gertrude, had been cruelly assassinated. This sad event together with the illustrious example of her aunt St. Hedwig are reckoned as the two chief influences which served to turn the little princess to serious subjects, and make her at so tender an age the unusually charitable and prayerful child she was. She never could resist the pleading of the poor, and so she was ever on the alert to despoil both the Landgrave's purse and the castle kitchen to minister to those in need. The proud courtiers never forgave or forgot this unseemly bias.

Long before she could read she loved to steal into the castle chapel and turn the pages of the huge psalter there. Every thing connected with the worship of God delighted her. If a

miser may kiss his gold and a lover his sweetheart's trinkets, why not Elizabeth the things of God? When she found the chapel door barred she would kiss the locks, the door, and even the walls, out of love for her Lord imprisoned within on the Altar.

Every day she sought little ways of conquering her self-will. For example, though she dearly loved dancing, often in the very midst of a dance she would stop suddenly, saying, "It is enough to give one turn for the world; I will deprive myself of the others in honour of Jesus Christ." And all this with such gaiety and simplicity as never to make her seem "pious" in the modern invidious sense of that word.

She loved to play, like all normal children. Puritanism has robbed us of that conception of games and amusement which Christians once held. Why is a certain game right on Saturday and not on Sunday? Why is the laughter of children and their innocent pleasure a thing apart from religion? One lesson which the life of the newly canonized Therese of Lisieux should teach us is to be simple about everything and to take nothing too seriously, even religion. To little Therese, religion was a game which she was playing with God. To us, at least, games and amusement ought to be

thought of as something to be done for God. Hence when Elizabeth was happiest she used to turn for a moment to God and thank Him for the pleasure which He was giving her. In sports, such games as brought prizes were very dear to her, for all her winnings were distributed among poor children on whom she always imposed the duty of prayer as an act of gratitude. She assigned herself certain devotions which were to be made every day, and willy nilly, she made them even though she had to arise from bed and say them after her attendants had gone to sleep.

She loved beautiful things. For that very reason she was careful always to deny herself the pleasure of wearing her frills and furbelows when she went to church on Sundays and festivals. Moreover, to strengthen her will and to learn to be self-denying, she often purposely made herself lose when she saw that she was winning in any game. A child of such rare discernment and refinement of soul must have found the company of rude, uncultured peasant children a real trial. Yet we know that she often sought out their companionship, much to the chagrin of her own fastidious waiting-maids.

To persevere in a course of discipline and prayer such as this was bound to make for a

wonderful development of character. We can quite understand why her companions used to whisper among themselves that sometimes when she was alone they caught a glimpse of a Playmate Who had come to be the comfort and confidant of her solitude. This wondrous Child was a stranger to them all, but His beauty was so far beyond that of this earth that they felt sure that He was the Christ Child Himself. Certainly by the time of her marriage she must have reached a state of sanctity and of experience in prayer such as has been vouchsafed only to the contemplatives of Holy Church.

She was perfectly simple and natural in her spiritual life. Some of the saints have been very learned. St. Catherine of Alexandria, the virgin martyr, for example, is looked upon as a patroness of learning. Not so the simple Elizabeth. She was of course well-grounded in the principles of our most holy religion, but her knowledge of Holy Scripture and the deeper things of theology was so defective that in later years her husband felt it necessary to obtain for her a confessor and spiritual director who could instruct her well in these things. In other words Elizabeth attained mastery over herself and great progress in holiness as a child by an unusually diligent use of the

ordinary and simple things of the Christian religion. What she did can be done by anyone who has the will.

Both as child and woman she was humble and self-effacing, never self-assertive. But she was always a leader. Her religion only added to the charm of her personality. Her cleverness enabled her to find ways of introducing prayer into the games which she played with her companions. Every day she managed to lead a procession of them into the castle chapel for a visit to the Blessed Sacrament.

It was once the beautiful custom for every maid of high rank to choose by lot one of the holy Apostles to be her especial patron. Elizabeth's particular and favorite saint was St. John the Evangelist whom she loved because of his virginal purity. Long before the selection she began praying earnestly that he would be the one assigned to her. On the eventful day twelve tapers, each inscribed with the name of an Apostle, were laid on the Altar. Elizabeth in her turn took the first chance presented, and to her great joy it bore the name of St. John. From this time on she cultivated a great devotion to the "Beloved Disciple," and no one ever asked a favor of her in the name of St. John and was refused, even though it might have

caused her much inconvenience, as we have already seen that it once did. Perhaps it was from this Apostle of the Sacred Heart that she learned to be the pure, courteous, forgiving, patient and charitable child she ever was.

In addition to her devotion to St. John the Evangelist, she naturally also had a great love for the Mother of our Lord. Motherless herself, she chose the Blessed Virgin to be her foster-mother. She loved to think of the nearness of Mary to Jesus. As to Catholics today, it seemed natural to her to make friends with the friends and companions of our Lord, chief of whom of course is His Mother. What is Christianity but friendship with Christ and His friends? Devotion to our Lady always lets us into the intimate family life of our Lord. As Jesus came through her to us so we had best go by her to Him. We cannot love the blessed Mother too much if we love her Son much more.

It is related that when Elizabeth was sad or in need of advice and encouragement our Lady herself often came in person to help the lonely little maiden. She who came to the assistance of the embarrassed and distressed hostess at the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee came also to the assistance of this her adopted daughter, the little Elizabeth, whenever she was needed.

We love to think that these things were so. Such experiences do not come to us, but then neither do we serve God in so energetic and whole-souled a fashion as did Elizabeth.

Meanwhile the love between herself and Louis grew stronger every day. As Montalembert says, it was "a touching and salutary custom which existed in Catholic ages and families—to bring up together those whose after-lives were destined to be united; a blessed inspiration, which mingled in the mind of man the pure name of sister with the sacred name of wife, so that none of the young heart's freshness was lost, but the fond and varying emotions of brotherhood served to prepare for the grave and arduous duties of marriage. Thus all that was ardent and impetuous in the soul was calmed down and sanctified; thus the purest and closest relations of life were from childhood joined in an earnest and only love, providing for after-years the remembrance of the sweetest and most holy affections." Always to the end of his short, brave and glorious life this young man called her "my sweet sister," and to the end of her life Louis was ever to Elizabeth her "dear brother." These titles show us that they were united in spirit as well as in human affections, and we do not wonder that the old chroniclers declared

that the angels ever dwelt with them in their wedded life.

6

So far the career of this little lass of great promise had been a very happy one. The deference due her rank plus the reverence due her simple goodness and devotion were seldom lacking. Such a hot-house atmosphere of admiration and obsequiousness is not suitable for the growth of the hardy virtues of the Christian religion. The good providence of God, watching over this elect child, therefore brought a great change in her life.

Shortly after her ninth birthday Duke Hermann died. His death was naturally a sorrow to her, for he had been in all things a father. But more than this, it was also the beginning of many sorrows. Now that his protecting influence was removed the worldly people of the Thuringian court could say openly what in the past they had dared say only in secret. Heretofore any one who had unfavorably criticised Elizabeth had been immediately silenced by her loving and admiring foster-father. Now those whose amours and hypocrisies were in constant though unconscious condemnation by the simplicity, purity and genuine goodness of this little child, were free to condemn her as

much as they chose, and they wasted no time in doing it. They never for a moment forgot that she was the future mistress of the Court, and a regular panic of dread seems to have spread among them. Persistent efforts to make her over into a shallow worldling failed, and so began a petty persecution of sarcasm and scorn. The sweetness, courtesy, and unswerving perseverance of Elizabeth during this first unhappy period of her life shows of what stout stuff saints are made. They cannot be squelched. They thrive on adversity. Yet they are no different from us. We have the same Faith, grace, temptations and opportunities. We lack only their generosity.

Of course she had some who consoled and helped her. There was always her dearest Louis. He could do nothing to stop the snubs and insults because he was only a minor and his mother, the ringleader in them, was the reigning duchess. Doubtless Elizabeth's confessor also helped her to be the brave but quiet, forgiving, and ever-courteous child she always showed herself to be. Prayer and sacrament also strengthened and encouraged her. She developed no "inferiority complex," nor did she become priggish or self-conscious. Rather she went serenely on her way of childish play and prayer. Her girlhood is somewhat of the

sort that Catholic imagination has pictured the Blessed Virgin's to have been, gay, sweet, thoughtful, prayerful and simple, quite unlike that of one who has been taught to live for herself alone.

Mother-like, the Duchess Sophia no doubt considered her son Louis "too good" for Elizabeth, though where a better match could have been found is hard to say. At any rate she was prone to find fault with her. For the most part Sophia was kinder to Elizabeth than others were, but during this stage of our princess' career, she rebuked the poor girl daily because of her humble and retiring ways. Agnes, Louis' beautiful sister, following her mother's lead, lost no opportunity of telling the child that in nothing did she resemble a princess, but that rather she was by disposition and action fitted only to be a scullery maid. The other young girls of the court found occasion to complain because she did not take enough interest in their games and sports, and showed a preference for the poor and the peasantry. Their gibes and taunts were thus added to the insults of Agnes and Sophia. Perhaps the contrast of a princess-royal who thought little of rank or frivolity was to their lesser birth and inordinate love of riches and pleasure a little too much for them. At any rate no one is capable

of such cruelty as the young toward each other because experience has not yet developed either imagination or sympathy in them.

On the feast of the Assumption we are told that the Duchess Sophia called Agnes and Elizabeth to her and proposed that they go down to Eisenach to the Church of our Lady to hear high mass. Perhaps there might even be a sermon in praise of the Blessed Virgin, she added, sermons being more in demand then than now. And she gave a command that they were to don their royal raiment and ducal coronets and jewels.

The two girls adorned themselves as she had bidden them and accompanied her to the city. In the Church was a huge crucifix. At the sight of the life-like image of the dying Saviour, Elizabeth was overcome with devotion. She took off her crown and prostrated herself before the crucifix, hiding her face in her little hands. The Duchess rebuked her rudely.

"What ails you, Elizabeth? What new whim is this that you wish everyone to laugh at you? Can you not do as we do instead of behaving like an ill-reared child? Is your crown too heavy? Why do you remain thus stooped like a peasant?"

"Dear Lady, do not blame me," begged the little girl, humbly rising. "Behold before my

eyes my God and my King crowned with sharp thorns, and can I who am but a little creature remain before Him wearing pearls and gold and jewels? My coronet mocks His thorny wreath."

Those who are of a conventional mind will sympathize with poor, respectable Sophia whose mental attitude is so like that of staid and respectable Church-folk today. Indeed we do not question that Sophia would have made a good "Episcopalian." Yet since the tables were so neatly turned by the words of a child, and in order to avoid a contrast disadvantageous to them in the eyes of the people, Sophia and Agnes were obliged to imitate Elizabeth's action and lay aside their crowns while in the presence of the humble King of kings though, as the chronicler quaintly adds, "it would have been more pleasing to them not to do so."

By the time the year appointed for her marriage with Louis came round, the insults had become almost unbearable. The whole court of Thuringia declared itself averse to the marriage. The officers had no notion of being subject to a duchess who distributed to the poor in alms every cent she could lay her hands on and who even begged left-over food from the castle kitchen to carry to starving paupers.

The relatives and counsellors of the duke clamoured loudly that she be given her dowry and sent back to her father where she belonged. The Duchess Sophia complained that she was not in the least fitted to be the wife of her rich and noble son, and seized every opportunity to induce her to enter a convent. Agnes sarcastically continued to say that she had missed her vocation in not becoming a kitchen maid. The intimate companions of the duke used every means in their power to influence him to give up the idea of marrying her. His two younger brothers, Henry and Conrad, were antagonistic to the point of insult. All were unanimous in condemning her as socially impossible.

Is it any wonder that little Elizabeth, a child not yet fourteen years old, deprived of the protection of her father, who was too far away to realize her plight, living in the midst of a strange and unfriendly court, subject to every sort of insult and mockery, cut off from all human consolation—is it any wonder that she took her troubles to our Lord, and in silence at the foot of the cross opened her heart to Him? She was human. Hateful thoughts, bitter words, unkind deeds and sharp reprisals suggested themselves. But there she always waited until peace and resignation had been restored to her soul, and then cheerfully re-

joined her maidens and the poor girls who were her chosen companions. Thus the attempts to make a worldling of this child who was sprung of the kingly race of Hungarian royal saints only confirmed her in the life of prayer and devotion. Oftentimes today among us there are children subjected to just such treatment as this if they happen to be trained in Catholic parishes and live in non-Catholic homes. For our consolation let us remember that if the devil makes sinners he also makes saints.

7

"My Lady Elizabeth," said Agnes one day, "if you imagine that our lord, my brother, will marry you, you mistake very much; or if he does, you must become quite a different person from what you are now."

These words put a new and terrible fear into Elizabeth's heart. Could it be possible that her Louis too would forsake her? True, while out of regard for his mother he could not much manifest his love for her, yet he made many little secret visits to her, consoling her tenderly in her moments of sadness, and he never returned empty-handed from hunting parties or trading expeditions, but always brought her something rare and precious as a love-gift and a token that he had thought of her in his absence.

Doubtless sometimes he feared that she was too holy and pure to be other than the bride of Heaven, but his own love did not waver.

On one occasion the Duke inadvertently omitted to bring her the usual gift. Elizabeth felt this forgetfulness keenly, the more so since her associates boasted of it as a symptom of a change in Louis' feelings toward her. Elizabeth confided her grief to Lord de Varila, and the great cupbearer now had an opportunity to keep the promise of fidelity which he had made to King Andrew. He spoke of the incident to Louis privately during their next hunting party.

"Will you be pleased, my lord, to answer a question I am going to put to you?"

"Speak confidently and I will tell thee all thou wouldst know."

"Then," said the knight, "what are you going to do with my lady Elizabeth whom I brought to you? Will you take her for your wife, or will you break your troth-plight and send her back to her father?"

Louis pointed to Mt. Inselberg, the highest in all Thuringia. "Dost thou see that mountain before us? If it were of pure gold from its base to its summit, and that all were to be given me on the occasion of sending away my Elizabeth, I would never do it. Let them think

or say of her what they please. I say this, that I love her, and only her, and nothing better than her in this world. I will have my Elizabeth in spite of them all. She is dearer to me for her virtue, and goodness than all the kingdoms and riches of the earth."

"I beg of you, my lord, to let me repeat to her these words."

"Tell them to her, and tell her also that I will never listen to those who counsel me against her. Give her this as a pledge of my faith." And Louis drew from his alms-purse a tiny double-cased mirror set in silver.

When Lord de Varila told Elizabeth of all that had happened she thanked him with great joy. Then she opened the mirror and found—what do you think? What would you expect in such an intimate trinket belonging to a young cavalier? It contained a picture of our Crucified Lord. Elizabeth kissed it again and again, for it was a pledge of divine love and of Louis' human love sanctified thereby.

The time soon came when Louis could keep his word and claim Elizabeth as his bride. In 1218 he reached his eighteenth birthday and was armed as a knight. The following year he successfully carried out his first campaign in war. On his return he set the date of the wedding with such fearlessness that none dared in-

terfere any more. He had proved that he was a man, that he could fight and rule. Now he would take whom he chose as his wife, and he chose her whom he had always loved. From this time on Louis showed himself a brave and good man, a worthy husband of his fair and devout girl-wife. From then to the end of their brief young lives theirs was a most perfect wedded love.

III

ELIZABETH, THE WIFE OF LOUIS

Rejoice with the wife of thy youth; and be thou ravished always with her love. Prov. 5, 18, 19.

Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her. Prov. 31, 11.

1

ELIZABETH'S wedding day was in a worldly sense a real triumph for the humble princess. Now that she was actually the wife of the noble Louis and the Duchess of powerful Thuringia, people were quick to sing her praises. The same men and women who yesterday plotted to rob her of her dowry and send her back in disgrace to her father, and who on the morrow will not scruple to expel her cruelly from her castle, a pauper, are loud now in their acclamation of her as a devout and amiable princess. It is a strange thing, this trait in human nature. Our Lord too was one Sunday greeted with palms and hosannas, and the next Friday shamefully done to death by His erstwhile enthusiastic admirers. Since the

disciple is not above the Master, it was fitting that St. Elizabeth should be in all things as her Master.

Elizabeth's marriage was one of the most brilliant social events of that age. All the nobility of the principality and of the neighbouring provinces thronged to the Wartburg to celebrate the royal nuptials. They vied with one another in seeing who could show the most honour to the fair bride. Curiously enough it was the Dowager-Duchess Sophia and her daughter Agnes who far surpassed all others in lavishing attentions on her.

Elizabeth had grown into a maiden who might charm the heart of any good man. Her beauty was fascinating; her features fine and regular; her complexion a clear brown; her hair black; her figure full of grace and elegance; and her deportment that of a princess, dignified but gracious and simple. It was her eyes that chiefly captured attention, dark, lustrous and beaming with tenderness. The eyes are the windows of the soul, and mercy and goodness looked out of hers.

By common consent Lord Walter de Varila was chosen for the honour of conducting Elizabeth from the castle to the church. Here high mass was celebrated and the sacred ceremonies of the sacrament of marriage were car-

ried out in the most solemn manner. Then followed three festal days of banqueting, dancing and jousting before the guests departed and Elizabeth formally entered upon the duties of her new state of life.

Of all the souls which the Church has enrolled in the Kalendar of Saints it is doubtful whether any one has offered in a higher degree than St. Elizabeth the model of a Christian wife. In those days love and interest, far from concluding with the wedding ceremony, seemed to find in that sacrament but the beginning of it. Courtship took place after, not previous to marriage. We might well say with the Franciscan friar who was one of our Saint's biographers in the seventeenth century: "In our own day we see so little affection between married people, even amongst those who appear to be pious, that we may be astonished to see in so detached a princess so much love for her royal spouse."

As the wife of Louis all her thoughts and plans centered in him. She loved him with the devotion of a child. She waited upon his every preference, look, or gesture with instant obedience. The shortest separation from him brought her great grief. Even at table, in spite of a contrary custom, she would sit nowhere but at his side. She studied his likes and dis-

likes and never failed in any effort to please him.

When the duties of the dukedom took the young husband away Elizabeth at once would put off those adornments which she was happy to wear in his presence. In his absence she would dress like a widow even as she mourned like one over his departure. Thus she awaited his return in prayer and vigil. At the first hint of his approach she would adorn herself again and hurry to meet him, radiant in the beauty of her transfiguring love. How astonished must have been their worldly courtiers at such a spectacle of simple human love and devotion.

2

Here surely we must pause for a moment's consideration of Louis. He was in many respects a contrast to Elizabeth, in complexion fair, in stature tall and big, in action bold and intrepid, but like her he was great and good. Our own age is sometimes called the age of young men as a contrast to former ages when ripe years and venerability are supposed to have been so much in demand as to have kept young people from occupying important places and fulfilling important careers. Yet Louis was only twenty-seven when he died, and be-

fore that time he had proved himself a capable general in many battles, a wise and just ruler of an extensive and wealthy country, a man of great force of character, a gentle, considerate and loving husband, and a devout Christian of unblemished life. To very few men not yet thirty years old can such a tribute as this be paid—a tribute to an all-round and well-finished goodness and greatness.

His contemporaries say that no one could see Louis and not love him. Except his glorious namesake, St. Louis of France, the Patron Saint of the men-tertiaries of St. Francis, no prince of his times possessed so pre-eminently the virtues of a Christian knight and sovereign. His special, distinguishing mark was an unstained purity of body and soul. He possessed that sign of Christian continence and chastity which older writers called "shamefacedness," a form of modesty which made him on certain occasions as bashful and as quick to blush as a maiden. This is the more to be admired since he was a great noble who could do what he would with his own. At sixteen he was master of one of the most powerful principalities in all Germany. Moreover there were about him many men and women who wished and tried to corrupt and pervert him. We are told of a time when at a dance a certain mar-

ried woman drew his attention because of her grace and beauty, and one of his courtiers offered to arrange an amour between them. The prince indignantly exclaimed: "Be silent! How dare you propose that I become an accomplice in a crime which as a judge I am myself so often called upon to punish." Another time when he was alone in repose a young girl was brought by a knight into his very apartment. Louis, first surprised and then grieved, called at once some of his trusted servants and sent her away unharmed with a beautiful gift saying: "Lower your veil, fair maiden, and take this gift as a blessing that you may return in joy to your family." These events happened before Louis' marriage and are rendered more touching by the fact that the little virgin Elizabeth knew of the temptations put in Louis' way and once was found in tears saying: "They wish to take my brother's precious soul and destroy it." Who knows but that the sweet prayers of the little girl may have had much to do with his eminent grace and virtue of chastity?

Every day his chaplain celebrated a mass for him in his own chapel. He also loved to go for a retreat to his favorite abbey of Reinhartsbrunn, and quite fittingly, according to his often-expressed wish, he was buried there. He

learned from these good monks the necessity of curbing and training the appetites and desires in order to be a good Christian athlete, and so he made it a rule never to eat salted or spiced meats, which were then considered luxuries, nor to drink beer, nor, except when ill, to take wine.

All his biographers love to illustrate his courage by the story of the lion, a gift from the Emperor, which escaped from its cage and rushed toward him with a roar. He stood his ground, tamed the wild beast by his own superior courage and led it back to its chains. His physical strength and agility were great even in that age of supermen. To his courage and strength there was joined a remarkable courtesy and chivalry. Of his truthfulness there has been quoted of him, "One could build upon his word as upon a rock." An epitome of his life is contained in his motto chosen in boyhood when the obligations of his rank were being taught him: *Piety, Chastity, and Justice toward all.*

As a ruler he was brave, charitable to the poor and oppressed, inflexible to those who broke God's law, and indulgent to those who failed to observe his own. He gained particular fame for destroying many robber castles throughout his realm. As one writer has well

said, such a true Christian prince could not receive a richer compensation than the love of a saint. It is not strange that among the German people Louis himself is still familiarly called "Louis the Saint" though Holy Church has never officially granted him this title. At any rate he is a shining example of the ideal of Catholic chivalry.

Like all the princes and wealthy men of his time, who were never content to leave behind them a monument of mere marble or granite, Louis wished to raise to himself a great monument of prayer and service to God. His father Hermann, before he died, had built the beautiful Abbey of St. Catherine in Eisenach, and established there a community of nuns who were to make a memorial for him both before God and man. Here also he was buried. As we have seen, Louis was a special friend to the monks of Reinhartsbrunn. This abbey he befriended in every way, and so he destined it to be his memorial and mausoleum.

Is it not strange that such a custom as this has died out? Would you not expect more of our own Churchmen to aid religious in founding their houses that as founders they might have a legitimate share in the worship and spiritual works of such an institution? What joy would come to such an one at death in the

knowledge that eternity might be made sweeter by the daily offering of mass and prayers over one's tomb in the religious house of one's own foundation.

Let us relate an incident in Louis' friendship with these monks to illustrate how determined and forceful he could be. One Saturday evening Louis went to the abbey and was told that the monks were suffering armed interference and oppression from a neighbouring robber-nobleman. At early dawn next morning Louis heard low mass. He then told the Father Abbot not to carry his cross nor to permit high mass to be sung until his return. In the meantime messengers had been sent to gather Louis' soldiers. At their head he marched at once against the castle of the offending lord, scaled its walls and took him prisoner. Duke Louis then hastened back to the abbey. As soon as he arrived the usual procession for high mass was formed, the Abbot's cross was carried out, and the usurper-knight and his soldiers were made to walk in chains before the cross. After mass the captured robber swore that henceforth he would leave the monastery alone, but the precaution of demolishing his castle was taken nevertheless. Surely this splendid act of justice was a big one to be meted out so quickly between hearing early mass and late mass.

Several instances of his protection afforded to religious are on record. He himself was likewise careful that his frequent visits to the abbey with so large a retinue should not be an embarrassment to the good monks. He therefore established a kitchen and a larder for his own use while there, and was careful always to leave behind him provisions enough to support the monastery for two or three days.

Another instance of his quaint ideas of justice may be given. One day he happened to meet a travelling peddler. On questioning this man about his business Louis found that the poor creature could scarce eke out a decent living, and that it would help him much if he had written authority from the Duke for safe passage everywhere throughout Thuringia so that he might not be molested or taxed. Louis at once said that he wished to go into partnership with him and that as a sign of partnership he would grant him this passport. The peddler departed overjoyed, and made it his practice to return every New Year's Day to the Wartburg to make a report to his partner of their growing business. Finally he was able to set up in business on a much larger scale and to obtain very precious wares from distant countries. This however proved his undoing. Certain great people in the neighbouring province

of Franconia despoiled him of his goods and laughed at him when he declared that Louis would protect such as he. The following New Year's Day he arrived sad and ragged at the doors of the castle on the Wartburg. With characteristic vigour Louis at once carried war into Franconia and forced the authorities there to make ample restitution for their carelessness in the administration of justice. Elizabeth was the Patroness of the Poor, but Louis was ever their just and merciful protector.

3

A whole book could be written on the beauty of the home life of these two extraordinary young people. Poet and sculptor have loved to linger over it, for they have found in it the ideal of true Christian marriage. Not on mere admiration or fleeting human passion did they found their married life. Rather it was on a common faith, a strict practice of the virtues which this faith teaches and a faithful performance of the duties it imposes. "Mixed marriages" will only be successful among those people whose religion means little to them. There is no stronger passion for division or union than religion. And if, as the Prayer Book marriage service makes so clear to us, holy marriage is a union of two souls in Christ,

symbolical of the indissoluble union betwixt Christ and His Church, certainly such indissolubility can only be protected and maintained by the profession of a common religion. In these days "mixed marriages" are fraught with special dangers because the Christian ethics of the marriage relationship are not held by those who have rejected the ethics of the Catholic Church.

Notwithstanding the youthfulness of Elizabeth, for she was only thirteen at marriage, or her royal birth, she never forgot that Louis was her head, even as Jesus Christ is the head of the Church, and that she should be obedient to him in all things even as the Church is to Jesus Christ. On his part we know that there was ever exercised toward her the greatest tenderness and love because he had for her the greatest admiration and reverence. Perhaps it was his early love for her that had kept him so clean-minded and high-souled among the pitfalls of dawning manhood and the many temptations that his great wealth and royal prerogatives made for him. The sweet titles of brother and sister which they used in speaking to each other to the end of their married life were symbolic of the pure and grave marital affection which marked their perfect union.

So great was their confidence in each other

that they never found it necessary to practice deceit or concealment in the affairs of their common life. He very soon discovered the great austerities and penances which she practised and the long hours she spent in prayer. He thoroughly approved of her love of almsgiving. In every way he encouraged her in her practices of piety even when he did not himself feel called to them. It is true that in his great love for her he sometimes worried for fear she was undermining her health by the mortifications which she was practising. But even when he felt she was imprudent he did not do what is so commonly done by husbands in our own age of individual freedom. He never forbade his wife to practise this or that devotion. He well knew that the wife of his heart had a soul of her own for which she alone was responsible to God, and that their love and the marriage tie never gave him permission to come between her and her Creator. Christ, not he, was Lord of her soul. And even when he remonstrated with her, he secretly felt that he and his people would receive great blessings through her sanctity.

4

About a year after their marriage Louis and Elizabeth, with a large retinue, went to Hungary to visit the scenes of her babyhood. It

was upon her return to Thuringia that her first babe was born, a son whom she named Hermann. In honour of the joyful event Louis caused a great stone bridge to be erected at Kreutzburg in which city the little Hermann was born. In classic times bridge-building gave its name to the priesthood, and always bridges have had a fascination for the human race. A bridge is ever a sign of unity, of rivers crossed and difficulties conquered. In that distant age bridges were greater works of mercy than now, but surely never could a more interesting tribute be paid to anyone than to build a bridge in his honour.

But to Elizabeth, happy as she was, this was not an occasion of mere worldly rejoicing. Barefoot and clad in the simple, grey garments of a common peasant, she stole away quietly from the castle and carried her babe in her arms down the steep hill to the church in distant Eisenach. There, like the Blessed Mother at the Presentation, she laid him on the altar with a taper and a lamb, and then said a prayer that the Lord Jesus would receive the little child as His own. This beautiful ceremony was repeated at the birth of each of her other three children.

She named both of her first two little girls "Sophia" in honour of their grandmother, the

Duchess-Dowager. There is something touching in this. She may have hoped by it to soften the heart of that harsh old lady who never ceased to try to make trouble between the husband and wife. Her fourth and last child, who was also a little daughter, she named "Gertrude" in remembrance of her own mother.

Her love for her children, like her love for her husband, was of a most intense and ardent nature. She never did anything by halves. Her passion for her husband and children was like her passion for God—whole-souled and deep. Indeed, in later years her confessor reproached her with not being sufficiently detached and with loving her family and her friends in too ardent a fashion.

Of the fate of her children more will be said later. Certain it was that they were as much blessed through the prayer-life of their mother as from the training she gave them—perhaps more, for they were all separated from her in early childhood. But never did they forget her, and the proudest of the many titles which they put after their signatures was always "son" or "daughter," as the case might be, "of St. Elizabeth."

5

We cannot do better than to conclude this part of our story by showing what kind of

ideal governed the personal life of this holy wife of Duke Louis and the mother of his children. As we shall see later in our story, he obtained for her a learned priest, Master Conrad, to be her spiritual director. This man wrote out for her direction

TWELVE MAXIMS OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

1. Patiently endure contempt in the midst of voluntary poverty.
2. Give humility the first place in your heart.
3. Renounce human consolations and the pleasures of the flesh.
4. Be merciful in all things to your neighbour.
5. Have always the remembrance of God enshrined in your heart.
6. Return thanks to the Lord for having by His Passion redeemed you from hell and from eternal death.
7. Since God has done so much for you, bear the Cross patiently.
8. Consecrate yourself entirely, body and soul, to God.
9. Recall frequently to your mind that you are the work of the hands of God, and conse-

quently act in such a manner as will insure your being with Him for eternity.

10. Pardon in your neighbour all that you desire that he should forgive in you; do for him all that you would wish he should do for you.

11. Often think of the shortness of life, and that the young die as well as the old; ever, then, aspire to eternal life.

12. Incessantly bewail your sins, and pray God to forgive them.

IV

ELIZABETH, THE DUCHESS OF THURINGIA

Surely vain are all men by nature, who are ignorant of God, and could not out of the good things that are seen know Him that is: neither by considering the works did they acknowledge the Workmaster. For by the greatness and beauty of the creatures proportionably the Maker of them is seen. Wis. 13, 1-5.

1

A MORE worldly-wise and less heavenly-wise person than Elizabeth might have looked upon all the happiness granted her in her married life as the end of her being, but not so did our Saint reason. She was wise enough to know the danger of happiness enjoyed and accepted for its own sake. She was therefore always careful to look upon it as a gift from the good God given to her for the sole purpose of drawing her heart closer to that true joy which can only be perfectly realized in heaven. On this basis she redoubled her penances and mortifications and thus constantly increased in favour with God and with man. In no sense could she have been said to

have paraded her vigils, her fasts, or her austerities. Nor did she allow them to make her sad or gloomy. She had a true Franciscan horror of gloom. Of Christians who pray in a spirit of grief or severity she once said: "They seem as if they wish to frighten our good God. Can they not say to Him all they please with cheerful hearts?" The admonition of St. Francis to his friars regarding good cheer was always obeyed by her: "Let them take care not to appear like hypocrites, gloomy and sad, but let them be jovial and merry, showing that they rejoice in the Lord, and becomingly courteous."

After her hours spent as Martha in loving ministration to the sick and needy, all done at the sacrifice of her own private allowance and spare time, she used to go like Mary to the feet of her Saviour. Here she often remained for several hours at a time in prayer. It mattered not at all to her whether the period was one of desolation or consolation. Perhaps she knew the saying of St. Clare: "When one is in tribulation it is necessary to be more happy and more gay because one is then nearer to God." Like so many of the Saints the romantic hour of midnight, the hour when Christ the Lord was born, was the time she loved best to pray. An account of this has been preserved

to us which shows us once again how near the sublime is to the ridiculous. It would doubtless have seemed like wearing her religion on her sleeve to discuss all the details of her customs of prayer when she first married Louis, and perhaps she feared that he might not approve of her spending her nights in prayer instead of sleep, for after all he was not yet at the spiritual stage which craves for prayer with an intense hunger which will not be denied, as was Elizabeth. Yet she herself slept the sleep of the healthy and righteous. How was she to waken? Finally she hit on the happy scheme of having her maid Isentrude wake her each night at the appointed hour by gently twigging one of her toes. All went well, until one night Isentrude, perhaps sleepy herself, carelessly pulled the wrong foot. To her great embarrassment it was the Duke who awoke with a start. But the kind-hearted Louis was not long in guessing the cause of the disturbance and lay down again without the slightest sign of impatience. From this time Elizabeth no longer felt the need of concealing any of her penitential exercises from her husband.

2

The preference of this regal duchess for the humblest clothing has already been mentioned.

When necessity demanded it she dutifully assumed her royal purple as befitted her station in society. At other times she adopted the plainest of cloth and colour out of love for Him who was clothed with humility. And let him who readeth understand. She wished to be like our Lord. She loved to be so even in small details. Gradually she renounced all the luxuries of that period, the dyed stuffs, bright colored veils for the head, pleated sleeves, long dresses with trains. She earnestly recommended this plainest of attire to the noble ladies who from time to time visited her, and she even gave them patterns of more modest dresses than they were accustomed to wear. Her efforts were by no means in vain. Many of her friends were led by her example to renounce all these worldly superfluities of vanity. Undoubtedly we have here the effect of the Third Order Rule which, as we shall see later, she embraced with Louis' consent. It called for simple clothes just as it called for the simple life.

A homely miracle of this period is related of the Duchess Elizabeth. Whether altogether true or not in details, yet in general spirit it shows that God never allows fidelity for His cause to interfere with the duties of our station in life. In the year following her mar-

riage King Andrew sent several Hungarian nobles to visit the court at the Wartburg. They were to bring back to him news of his dear daughter and were also to ask Duke Louis to bring Elizabeth to visit her father in Hungary, an invitation which, as we have seen, Louis and Elizabeth accepted a year later. When the Duke heard of the mission of these lords he was greatly distressed, for the Duchess had distributed all her royal attire to the poor, and in her great love of simplicity had altered even her wedding clothes to a form better suited to her modesty. Now she had not a single robe in which it was fit for a duchess to appear. Here we see the reverse of the usual. Instead of the wife complaining "I have no clothes" it is the husband who complains because his wife has none.

"Ah, dear Elizabeth," anxiously began the Duke, "here are people just arrived from thy father's court. They have come to learn what manner of life thou leadest with me, and to see if thou hast really the retinue of a duchess. But how canst thou appear before them? Thou art so continually occupied with thy poor ones that thou forgettest thyself; and thou never wishest to wear other clothes than those miserable enough to make us both ashamed. What dishonour to me when these men will go and

tell in Hungary that I let thee want for raiment, and that they found thee in so pitiable a state, and now I have no time left to order others more suitable to thy rank and mine."

"My dear Lord," Elizabeth answered, "let not this disquiet thee; for I have earnestly resolved never to place my glory in my apparel. I can well excuse myself to these lords, and I will endeavour to treat them with such gaiety and affability that I shall please them as much as if I wore the richest vesture."

When her husband had gone Elizabeth, who practised well the precept to take all things to God in prayer, fell on her knees, begging God to make her agreeable to the visitors. Then having dressed herself as well as she could she went to join the guests. Not only did she enchant all present with her sweetness, gentleness and beauty, but to the great wonder of Louis she appeared clothed in a robe of silk and velvet, embroidered with costly pearls. The Chronicler says that the Hungarians declared that never was the Queen of France more gorgeously attired. We wonder if even then France was the home of styles and fashions.

As soon as the Hungarians had departed Louis asked her how she came to be so beautifully clad. She smiled and answered: "Be-

hold what the Lord can do when He pleases." But the people of Thuringia said that it was an angel from heaven who clothed the humble princess-saint.

Striking as are Elizabeth's practices of mortification and prayer, it is her great passion of charity toward the poor that has fascinated all who study the history of her soul. From it she gets that title which is more glorious than "Duchess" or "Princess." She is the "Patroness of the Poor." From her babyhood she exercised this virtue in perhaps a higher than ordinary degree. Aside from a certain natural tendency of compassion toward the poor she was stimulated by those great aids which God has given to all His children, the Faith and practice of Holy Church. The life of St. Elizabeth exemplifies what an excellent teacher Holy Church is. If we will all devoutly observe, as did St. Elizabeth, her divinely inspired series of feasts and fasts, Mother Church will reward our fidelity by imprinting on our hearts the varying virtues which these seasons are meant to represent. It was with this in view as well as our duty of worshipping God that holy Father Francis stressed the daily offering of the Divine Office in some form or other for his friars, nuns and tertiaries.

The ceremonies of Holy Week were espe-

cially dear to the heart of the Duchess Elizabeth. On Maunday Thursday she would discard all that might remind her of worldly pomp. Clothing herself like an ordinary beggar she would gather around her twelve of the poorest and most repulsive of her subjects, some of them lepers. Then in imitation of the King of kings, this daughter of a king would humbly wash their feet. Afterwards she would pass the whole night in contemplation of her Lord's agony. At the dawn of Good Friday she would say to her maidens: "This should be a day of humiliation to all. I desire that none of you should pay me the least respect." Dressed again as a poor peasant, barefoot, she would make short visits to all the churches near the Wartburg and lay on each altar a tiny offering of linen, candles, or incense. The duchess-mother might scold her for making such a trifling offering on this solemn occasion; the more pretentious members of the court might jeer at the sovereign princess who thus set such an example of parsimonious munificence; but Elizabeth well knew that it was only by such little sacrifices and humiliations that she could do violence to the excessive generosity of her nature. On Good Friday she denied herself even of the pleasure of alms-giving!

It is not a difficult task to love the lovely and

lovable. Elizabeth's charity would not have been so glorious had it stopped with her devoted husband, her four beautiful children, and half a dozen or so of intimate friends. Every beggar, every sufferer, every abandoned child she met was a challenge to her love, but it was the despised leper, that most perfect type of the rejected Saviour, that was the object of her special solicitude.

During one of Duke Louis' brief absences from the Wartburg, Elizabeth, so the beautiful legend goes, discovered a little lad named Elias who was afflicted with this mysterious disease. His condition was so nauseating and horrible that no one was willing to care for him. What an act of extraordinary bravery it must have been for the fastidious Elizabeth to overcome her natural distaste sufficiently to minister to him. Not content with consoling him with words, she bathed and anointed his sores with her own hands, clothed him in garments she had made for her own children, and laid him in the bed she shared with her royal husband. It so happened that while she was busy caring for the child, Duke Louis returned to the castle. His mother immediately ran out to meet him.

"Come with me," she began in an angry tone of voice, "and I will show thee a pretty doing

of thy Elizabeth." She led him to the Duchess' room. "Now look! thy wife puts lepers in thy bed without my being able to stop her. She wishes to give thee leprosy; there! thou seest it thyself."

The Duke could not restrain a certain degree of irritation, and most of us can sympathize with him. But God rebukes our little love. The love of Elizabeth was a great love, like unto the Divine Charity of the Sacred Heart. For as Louis gazed he was struck motionless. There in place of the leper lad he saw the figure of Jesus Christ crucified. Turning to his wife the Duke cried, "Elizabeth, I pray thee often to give my bed to such guests. I shall always thank thee for this; and be not hindered by anyone in the exercise of thy virtues."

4

Living thus so intimately with the poor and to a certain extent for them, it is not astonishing that God should have inspired her with love of Holy Poverty. While Francis of Assisi was arousing all Italy to the love of Lady Poverty, God raised up in chivalrous Germany this daughter of a king who at the age of fifteen confounded the pride and pomp of royalty by her utter contempt of earthly grandeur. Already her place seemed to be marked by the

side of the Seraph of Assisi. In each generation God raises up witnesses to testify for Him in deed and life against the evil spirit of the times. In our own era of intellectual pride and sophistry we have Bernadette of Lourdes and Therese of Lisieux. In the wealth and splendor of the thirteenth century we have the Patroness of the Poor.

It was as natural for Elizabeth to speak of the joys of poverty as it was for any other princess to discuss the latest ball or the newest court dandy. Often talking with her maidens this girl-wife would try to realize her passionate desire for this counsel of perfection. Clothing herself in a poor, grey mantle such as was worn by the most wretched peasant, and covering her head with a torn veil, she would pretend to beg her bread from her companions. One day she spoke these prophetic words: "Thus will I walk when for the love of my God I shall be poor and in misery."

"O how poor was this princess in her riches and how rich in her poverty," said St. Francis de Sales after relating this incident.

In addition to these hidden inclinations of Elizabeth's soul, external events too were tending to mould her more and more in the Franciscan spirit. In 1221, the same year that St. Francis is said by some to have published the

Third Order Rule, his friars made their first foundations in Germany. Certainly nowhere could they find more sympathy and encouragement than from the young Duchess of Thuringia. It was through her interest that their first monastery was established in Eisenach, her capital city. Later Elizabeth chose as her confessor, Father Rodinger, one of the first Germans to embrace the Seraphic Rule. Having heard from these friars of the existence of the Third Order in Italy she was much impressed by the advantages it afforded the fervent Christian. Affiliation with it lent a special consecration to private mortifications and prayers. There were the privileges of being so closely connected with the friars and Poor Clares, of being remembered daily in their masses, offices and intercessions, of belonging to Francis' own family. Here at last she found a devotion to Holy Poverty that struck a sympathetic cord in her own ardent nature. According to the precepts of this Rule she asked permission of her husband to enter the Order, and having obtained this without difficulty, she was enrolled as the first tertiary in Germany. From this day on she observed the Rule with scrupulous fidelity, and it is certain that her example had much to do with the rapid extension of the Franciscan movement in Germany.

5

And now we come to the strangest and, in many ways, the saddest page in Elizabeth's life. She had barely attained her seventeenth year when the good friar Father Rodinger was removed from her. It was at this point that she first came in contact with Master Conrad, the man who was to wield such a profound but cruel influence over her soul for the rest of her life. When the Duke found it was necessary to replace Father Rodinger he wrote to the Pope to recommend a learned and enlightened guide for his wife, the Duchess. He felt, as we have said before, that Elizabeth needed further instruction in the Holy Scriptures, for in those days there was a much greater devotion to the Word of God than now. The Pope replied that he knew no priest more pious or more learned than Master Conrad, the Commissary-Apostolic in Germany. In addition to other virtues which recommended him, he was said to have been constant in the exercise of evangelical poverty to a high degree, having renounced not only his inheritance but also all temporal wealth connected with his ecclesiastical position. For this reason he has often been described as a mendicant Dominican, but it appears more probable that he always remained a secular priest. His zeal for poverty

alone would have sufficed for Elizabeth to submit her soul to his direction without reservation.

"I have chosen," she said, "the life of the poorest Order because it is the most despised, and had there been one still lower I would have selected it. I could have made a vow of obedience to a Bishop or a wealthy Abbot, but I preferred Master Conrad because he was nothing. He is but a poor mendicant, and thus I have no earthly resource in this life."

But Conrad is the most baffling mystery in the life of Elizabeth. He was rude, cruel, brutal, unreasonable. His treatment of his penitent was marked by constant severity that grew to be insult and persecution. Many today complain of their parish priests. Elizabeth's experience shows us how God can overrule great mistakes on the part of His ministers when we adopt towards them an attitude of patience and loyalty. Undoubtedly Master Conrad was a means of great grace to Elizabeth by virtue of his very faults.

Of course Conrad was not a bad man in the usual sense of the word. He possessed the characteristics of austerity, boldness, sternness and eloquence, virtues she so strongly admired and which were so foreign to her own gentle nature. As Kingsley has made her to say:

"He has the graces which I want; his sternness I envy for its strength; his fiery boldness I call the earnestness which dares not trifle with life's huge stake; his coldness but the calm of one who long hath found and keeps unwavering."

Conrad's zeal for the defence of the Church and the Faith took the form of violently persecuting all who in any way disagreed with his own convictions, and it was not long before he was known as Conrad, the heretic catcher. We read in mediaeval accounts of him that "innumerable heretics were burned by him," and that on one occasion "he sat and gloated over the agonies of four poor wretches writhing in flames." It is an historical fact that he fell victim to his own violence. In 1233 he and a companion were waylaid and killed by some nobles whom he had once insulted.

Louis secured the services of this strange priest as his wife's director, and a year later, in 1225, permitted her to make a vow of entire obedience to him. She added to this a vow of perpetual chastity in case she should ever become a widow. Conrad made his spiritual daughter's vow of obedience into an excuse for exercising his power over her in the most tyrannical way on the plea of perfecting her character.

One morning when the Duchess, in pursuance of her royal duties, was entertaining a company of visiting diplomats, Conrad unexpectedly sent her word to come and hear him preach. Finding it impossible to comply with the invitation, she sent him a message to that effect. Much annoyed at the seeming act of disobedience Conrad replied that from that hour he renounced the care of her soul. The next morning Elizabeth went to him in all humility and begged him to reconsider his impulsive decision. At first he refused to see her, and when he did, it was only that he might rudely refuse her request. Elizabeth flung herself at his feet, supplicating his pardon so fervently that at last he deigned to forgive her, though not without imposing a severe penance. This incident is a true type of Conrad's dealings with this pure soul. They are decidedly unjust. We can hardly imagine the Lord Christ or the gentle Francis of Assisi thus treating even the worst of sinners. In Elizabeth's case Divine Providence overruled this injustice, until, by her co-operation with grace, it became to her not a hindrance but a means of developing her fortitude and humility into the heroic virtues that they became.

Master Conrad felt that the poor people were unjustly taxed in order to defray the ex-

penses of the lavishly spread ducal table, and he positively forbade his penitent eating any food other than that which she knew was obtained from her husband's private resources. The young duchess observed this command with her usual fidelity. Not only was she frequently embarrassed by it, but often she was obliged to leave the table as hungry as when she sat down, fearing even to taste food lest it be the fruit of some poor peasant's toil. This was not mere scrupulosity on Elizabeth's part, but the result of a command laid on her in strict obedience, coupled with her devotion to the cause of the oppressed poor. Louis placed no obstacle in the way of his wife's perfectly observing this point of her rule. He gently warned her when forbidden dishes were served, and pressed her to eat when he knew for certain they were lawful.

"I would willingly do the same," he told her, "if it were not for fear of slander and scandal; but with God's help I shall soon change this kind of life."

To hide from the world what she did for God, Elizabeth had recourse to a thousand little stratagems. She concealed her fasting by busying herself with the wants of her guests, or by frequently occupying herself in giving orders to the servants. Often she would cut

her food into small pieces and scatter it over her plate to give it the appearance of the mere remains of a hearty meal.

Occasionally she and her maidens would visit the castle kitchens to inquire personally how each article of food was obtained. On days when they found nothing to trouble their consciences Elizabeth would clap her hands gleefully and cry with childish joy, "Today everything goes well; we can both eat and drink."

V

ELIZABETH, THE PATRONESS OF THE POOR

Never turn thy face from any poor man; and then the face of the Lord shall not be turned away from thee. Tobit 4, 7.

He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and look! what he layeth out, it shall be paid him again. Prov. 19, 17.

Give unto the Most High according as he hath enriched thee; and as thou hast gotten give with a cheerful eye. Use not uncomfortable words when thou givest anything, for God loveth a cheerful giver. Ecclus. 35, 10, 18, 15; II Cor. 9, 7.

1

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST is Himself the chiefest of the saints. This is called to mind by His mediaeval title, Saint Saviour. In Him there is every virtue and human perfection. As a prism takes the clear-shining rays of the sun and breaks them up into all the gorgeous hues of the rainbow, so Holy Church takes the grace and virtues which shine forth from Him Who is the Sun of Righteousness

and imparts their manifold beauties to her children through the seven sacraments. So each saint of God comes to exemplify some special virtue of the Lord Christ. The most beautiful commentary on His divine perfections is one that is being written every day in the spiritual struggles of us all. Many of its pages are smeared and torn, but many are exquisite in their finished perfection. This Book of Life Mother Church spreads open to our view in the biographies of the saints. You and I are each some day to have a page therein if we persevere in friendship with God and in our battle with evil. It may not be so fair a page as some, yet the fact remains that we are every day writing therein because we are "called to be saints" and we cannot escape our vocation except by absolute rejection of God. Thanks be to God, He has eternity wherein to work out that perfection in us which we refuse to permit Him to fully accomplish in time.

The sun is too brilliant for us to gaze upon. We cannot therefore ever know its true beauty. Hence we use a prism. And the light which God commanded to shine out of darkness and which hath shined into our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ is best seen and studied in its different prismatic rays in the

lives of different saints. If each saint is the exemplification of one of the perfections of our dear Lord's human soul, St. Elizabeth, as we know from our last chapter, is in a special way the exemplification of His boundless compassion toward the poor, the outcast and the unfortunate. To put it in a phrase, she is the Saint of the Divine Charity of the Sacred Heart. Well is she called the Patroness of the Poor.

2

The saints are often condemned as a sentimental and impractical race. Why should a duchess trouble herself to dress the wounds of a leper when a contribution to the Associated Charities would hire it done better than she could do it. In Elizabeth's time charity was esteemed so highly by those who wished to give it that they felt they must do it themselves. Elizabeth and others like her helped to bring into existence better methods of relief. They were pioneers in the movement of social reform. And thousands of Tierceline Franciscan nuns—nursing, teaching and ministering—have been inspired by the Dear Saint's example and have followed in her footsteps.

Let us not condemn her because she was possessed by the good Spirit of Charity. Like our Lord, of Whom we read that the Spirit

drove Him into the wilderness, there to fast and pray during His great forty days, so the Spirit of Charity drove the Patroness of the Poor wellnigh to excess in her passion for holy charity.

In the poor outcast lad Elias she saw not merely one lone soul. She saw all suffering humanity needing divine pity and succour, even as Isaiah saw and bare record: "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, nor bound up, neither mollified with ointment."

Nay more, she saw Jesus Christ Himself, "despised and rejected of men, a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief," from Whom we hide our faces because we "despise Him and esteem Him not."

Did she see farther and better than we? Is not this the meaning of the vision of Jesus crucified which Duke Louis beheld when he was about to censure his young wife for her extraordinary act in placing a leper in the royal bed? Let us call the saints sentimentalists if we will. But then, so are the chosen prophets of God who speak to us in the Old Testament—Ezekiel with his moving days and

his two sticks, Jeremiah with his linen girdle stuck in a hole in the rock, and Hosea with his wife of whoredoms. Whatever we may expect of the saints let us not expect them to be ordinary and commonplace. Their standards are not those of this world. They belong to the Kingdom of God and are foreigners on earth, understanding but little of its taboos and peccadilloes, and caring still less.

But let us not make the mistake of thinking the saints impractical. Elizabeth profited by the deep impression this incident made on Louis to obtain permission to erect an almshouse midway up the rocky ascent to the Wartburg, on a site since occupied by a Franciscan convent. This she intended especially for those too feeble to climb the steep hill to the castle to beg for alms. Never a day passed that Elizabeth did not visit her new institution and carry to it meat and drink from her own table which she denied herself. Hence St. Elizabeth has ever been the favorite patron of almshouses, orphans' and old people's homes, and hospitals and hospices.

2

In 1226 Duke Louis set out for Italy to aid the Emperor Frederick at war there. Scarcely had he left the Wartburg when a terrible fam-

ine ravaged Germany and especially Thuringia. Heavy gales beat down the corn, and shook the grain out of the ears. Then followed so much rain that wheat rotted on the sodden fields. The result was hunger and pestilence. So many died of hunger that the roads were strewn with dead bodies. The famished people frantically searched the woods for herbs and wild fruits. They even devoured dead horses and other beasts. The sight of so much misery would have melted a heart many times less tender than Elizabeth's. From then on her only thought was the relief of her unhappy people. To this end she directed all her efforts, for Louis had left her in sole authority during his absence. Though a child in years, she was a great lady and the actual ruler of a powerful principality.

Rumours of the Duchess' generosity had spread even to the most remote parts of Thuringia, and soon famished sufferers came from far as well as near to beg some relief at her hand. It is sweet to think of her as she is so often pictured, surrounded by these wretched beings, throwing her coins to right and left, and when they were gone giving the very jewels of her crown in alms.

Regardless of the remonstrances of the nobles she ordered the castle granaries to be

opened and all the grain to be given without reserve to the poor. With the prudence characteristic of saints she distributed this in quantities proportionate to the needs of the people and thus avoided waste and hoarding. She had as much bread baked daily at the castle as the ovens would hold and, with an eye to economy, this she distributed herself. It is said that at least nine hundred came to her every day to be fed. But we must not include in this number those who were too infirm to climb the steep hill to the castle and for whom Elizabeth made provision by establishing several almshouses and hospitals in Eisenach.

In one of these hospitals she founded a ward for deserted children and orphans. Twice a day without fail she descended the toilsome road from the Wartburg by foot to visit these asylums. Going from bed to bed she performed some little act of charity for each invalid, breathing the foul air so repulsive to her and watching by the side of the dying, and all this with a gentleness and sweetness nothing could alter. What time she could spare in addition she spent in visiting the tiny cabins that the poorest and most wretched of her subjects called home, and here she performed the lowest and most menial duties. One day she entered the hut of a lonely sick woman who

asked plaintively for a glass of milk. The Princess, deterred by nothing, not even by her own inexperience, sought out the stable and set about milking her first cow. On another occasion she gave a pair of shoes, a cloak and a dress to a poor old woman who, astonished at such beautiful things for a peasant like herself, cried out that she had never been so happy in all her life, and then swooned away as one dead. She probably had never before seen real shoes, much less worn them, nor even been decently clad in her life. Elizabeth hastened to raise her and reproached herself for endangering this life by her imprudence.

As soon as news of the famine penetrated to Italy Duke Louis demanded permission from the Emperor to return home, and having received it without difficulty, for he was a special favorite of Frederick II, he immediately set out for Thuringia. The principal officers of the Wartburg, especially the marshal and seneschal, very much feared their lord's anger when he learned the use Elizabeth had made of his treasures and provisions. Accordingly they went out to meet him, denouncing the lavish expenditures of his wife and how she had emptied the granaries and spent all the money left in her care.

But Louis answered them by saying: "Is

my dear wife well? That is all I care to know, the rest matters not! I wish you would allow my good little Elizabeth to give as much alms as she pleases, and that you would rather assist than contradict her; let her give as much as she wishes for God's sake. God will return the rest when He thinks it good. We shall never be impoverished by alms-deeds."

As if to bear record to this last statement, tradition adds that when he passed through the great hall he saw grain flowing in under all the doors, and the presses so full that corn ran over and covered the ground. He hastened on to meet his beloved Elizabeth and together they blessed God for their preservation and his safe return. Truly, prayer never makes us late and alms-giving never makes us poor.

3

This brief separation proved to be but the prelude to one longer and far more uncertain. Within the next year came the call of the Crusade, and among the first to vow himself to the cause was Duke Louis. He found no difficulty in making all the arrangements for his country during his absence, but when he thought of telling his wife, then it was that his courage failed. He finally resolved to delay making known his vow to her until the moment

of departure was at hand. Accordingly he wore his Crusaders' Cross secretly instead of in sight as was the general custom. But one evening as the two sat alone, Elizabeth, in a moment of tender familiarity, began to search his alms-purse. The first thing she drew from it was the Crusaders' Cross. At the sight of it she fell senseless to the ground. Louis attempted to calm her with tender words, but they fell on deaf ears, until at last he pleaded, "Dear Elizabeth, permit me to go, for I have made a vow to our dear God."

Then she was able to answer: "Against God's will I will not detain thee. I have offered thee and myself as a sacrifice to Him. May He in His goodness watch over thee. This shall be my prayer each moment. Go then in the Name of God."

For a long time they remained in silence; then they spoke of the child that was soon to be born to them, and as a pledge of their love they resolved to consecrate it to God in the religious life.

The farewell of this devoted husband and wife is one of the most touching in history. On the Feast of St. John Baptist all the knights assembled in the castle courtyard, and their sounds of praise to God were mingled with the parting cries of lovers and kinsfolk. In the

center stood Louis surrounded by his family, —his two brothers, the Duchess-Mother, his "sister" Elizabeth, and his three little children clinging to his garments. All too soon the signal to ride was given. Elizabeth brokenly declared she could not part from her husband but would follow him to the end. As a special favor she and her maidens were finally given permission to accompany the knights as far as the borders of Thuringia. She and her husband rode side by side until they reached the border. There Louis showed her the ring he used in sealing his private letters.

"Dearest Elizabeth, look well on this ring. I take it with me. On the sapphire is engraven the Lamb of God with His banner. Let it be to thy eyes a sure and certain token for all that concerns me. He who brings thee this ring, dear and faithful wife, and tells thee I am still alive, or have died, believe all that he shall say to thee. May the Lord bless thee, my dear little Elizabeth, my sweetest treasure. May He preserve thy soul and thy courage. Remember our happy life, our fond and holy love, and forget me not in thy prayers. Adieu; I can no longer stay."

With an almost superhuman effort he broke away from her. Elizabeth watched him as he bravely charged his knights to follow him off

to the Holy Land. When at last he was swallowed up in the distance she turned her horse's head slowly toward that once happy home with a sad presentiment that she was soon permanently to lay aside her royal robes for the widow's garb of mourning.

This was her greatest alms and biggest sacrifice, the gift of her husband to God in the service of the poor and distressed Christians of the Holy Land. The dedication of herself naturally followed but surely was gladly and joyfully accomplished. It was this surrender of her husband that tore her heart apart. But she knew that whom God loveth He chasteneth. She was willing to follow Jesus on the path of sorrows.

The Way of the Cross may be steep,
but it leads upward to God.
It may be hard,
but it leads onward to safety.
It may be narrow,
but it leads forward to fullness of life.
It may be long,
but it leads safely to eternity.
It may be weary,
but it leads us straight into the arms of Jesus.

VI

ELIZABETH, THE PAUPER OF EISENACH

If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. St. John 15, 19.

Destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy. Heb. 11, 37, 38.

Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven. St. Matthew 5, 12.

1

IN the fall of the year 1227, a few of the Crusaders, to the consternation of everyone, returned unexpectedly to Thuringia. They carried with them their leader's ring, for they came bearing the tragic news of his death. Shortly after reaching Italy, Louis had contracted a violent fever. Soon his condition became so serious that almost no hopes were held for his recovery. After making his will and charging these knights to announce his death to his dear Elizabeth, the young Duke—he was only twenty-seven years old—received the last sacraments and made a holy death.

His devoted followers buried him at Otranto and then marched on with heavy hearts to fulfill their vow of servitude to our Lord's Holy Sepulchre, resolving to carry his body back to Thuringia when they returned.

It was to the Duchess-Mother and her two sons, the Princes Henry and Conrad, that this message was first given, and the sad tidings spread rapidly throughout the dukedom where Louis was greatly loved and revered. All hearts turned in sympathy toward the young widow. Even Sophia seems to have become touchingly tender in her attitude toward her whom Louis loved above all else on earth, and she took upon herself the painful task of breaking the terrible news to Elizabeth.

"Take courage, my beloved child," she said, "and be not troubled by what has happened to your husband by God's will, for to that you know he was entirely devoted."

Elizabeth had no idea of the extent of her misfortune, and supposing her husband to have been taken prisoner she replied calmly: "If my lord is in captivity, with the help of God and our friends he will soon be ransomed."

"O my beloved child, be patient—take this ring—to our grief he is dead!"

At these words Elizabeth turned white. It was a cruel blow. Suddenly she became as

one beside herself. Rushing distractedly through all the corridors and passages of the great castle she cried out, "He is dead! He is dead!" Never again was she to experience so keen a sorrow. Her agony can perhaps be imagined but not described. These few words of lamentation which she chanted over and over again were interrupted by paroxysms of weeping and sobbing. As her ladies tried to console her they heard her murmur from time to time: "I have lost all! O my beloved husband! thou art dead and I am left in misery. Poor desolate widow that I am! Oh my God, comfort me. Oh my good Jesus, strengthen me in my weakness."

It was her habit of prayer only that saved her from being completely crushed under the weight of this great sorrow and the misfortunes that followed close upon it. How wonderful is the sacred habit of prayer. When the mind is too overcome with grief to think and the heart is well-nigh dead with despair, the habit of prayer asserts itself and flings our leaden spirits toward the good God, the source of all comfort. Even when we are in mortal sin, this habit forces us back to God and repentance. How stupid is the saying that we must not pray unless we feel like it. How much wiser is Bishop Brent's dictum, "When it's

hard to pray, pray hard." How natural that Holy Church strives to train all her children in this wonderful habit, and that she ever multiplies devotions—Holy Mass, the Divine Office, the Rosary, Meditation, Litanies, the Stations of the Cross, and a thousand more. Would you test a religion? See if it is rich in methods of prayer. How hopeless and helpless is the prayerless religion of today! Elizabeth managed to survive her great shock through prayer, and never did she afterwards express any bitterness either. One of the most admirable points of her character is that, after the first great shock was over, not one word of complaint against God's will ever passed her lips. We see here a finished result, but we can imagine the agony of the struggle by which it was accomplished.

The universal sympathy expressed for Elizabeth in the first hours of her trouble was fickle and short-lived. What did the grief of one silly woman matter when there were state affairs of a dukedom to be settled? And so the court counsellors put their heads together and plotted. Louis' son was of course the rightful heir to the throne, but little Hermann was only a lad of five years. A regent was necessary, and nowhere could a better tool be found for the hands of these rapacious counsellors

than the child's uncle, Henry, Louis' oldest brother.

2

This appointment was a most unfortunate one as far as Elizabeth was concerned. Henry himself does not seem at first to have been a wicked man. In fact Louis, on his departure for the Crusade in the Holy Land, had especially commended his dear family to this brother's care. Apparently Henry was only a weak and complaisant young man, a mere puppet in the hands of his advisers, and these were men who had not forgotten how Elizabeth had so completely foiled their financial schemes during the famine when she freely distributed the precious grain. Here at last was their opportunity to get even.

Very plausibly they persuaded Henry that Elizabeth was a dangerous character. She might give away the whole capital before their eyes if she were not promptly dealt with. Henry, blinded by the wealth and authority suddenly thrust on him, was easily convinced that if he would retain his new position he must indeed rid the Wartburg of Elizabeth. While he was not the originator, he at least gave his consent to one of the most cruel misdeeds in history.

On the first convenient night the innocent

young duchess was informed that she must find a home elsewhere, and without even a minute's time in which to gather together a few personal belongings, she was thrust out of her own home and the castle doors were closed behind her. In her arms she carried her tiny baby daughter, while her two faithful maids, Guta and Isentrude, followed with the three older children. To increase their sufferings, it was mid-winter in a land where there is much cold. Moreover every subject had been warned not to give shelter to the royal lady and her family. Was there ever a wickeder deed?

This tragic event has been so interwoven with romance and tradition that the exact details of the affair are not clear. The usual theory is that Elizabeth, in obedience to Henry's command, was forcibly driven out of the castle with unmentionable insults and accusations. Some however think that the only force Henry used was moral compulsion; that the means he adopted, knowing well what the result would be, was a command to eat food obtained in a manner contrary to her rule of life to which she was bound by the virtue and the vow of obedience, as we have seen from a former chapter. Be that as it may, at any rate we do know that Elizabeth was forced to leave the Wartburg on a night in mid-winter, and that

she was sent forth with her family into the cold and darkness, knowing not where to go. As she paused outside the castle gate with her little ones huddled and shivering around her, what must have been her agony of heart! But if she was really to be perfected in the virtue of charity she too, like our Lord, must share in all things the woes and needs of those to whom she would minister. Only thus could she come to know by personal experience the bitterness of those sufferings to the alleviation of which she gave her life.

Hence this expulsion from her castle served but to make Elizabeth better and greater. So it is with all those who belong to our Lord. "All things work together for good to them that love God." But of the Wartburg we might say as the wife of Phinehas said of Israel: "Ichabod! The glory is departed." Louis, the uncanonized saint, was dead. Elizabeth, the canonized saint, was driven out. It was fitting that in a later day this castle, which had treated God's Own so harshly, should be the nest and refuge of an apostate monk, the great faith-destroyer, Martin Luther. It was fitting also that the city of Eisenach should lose the light of our most holy religion. For did not this city turn against the Lord's anointed when they turned their erstwhile benefactress from

their doors? "Verily, I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city."

"Surely, my Lady," whispered Guta, "as soon as we reach Eisenach we will find shelter. Everyone there has experienced your generosity and these good people will be only too grateful to be able to repay you now."

Strengthened by this hope the little company made their way down the rocky path to the city, but here new trials awaited them. At the first house they came to Elizabeth tapped gently on the door to beg a bed for her little children. The door was opened cautiously. Some one peered out at her. Then the door was slammed noisily in her face and bolted. Very much puzzled by this, Elizabeth turned and went on to the next house, but here again the same thing occurred. The wily counsellors had foreseen what might happen if the Duchess were enthusiastically received by her subjects, and so had caused Henry to issue a strongly-worded proclamation strictly forbidding any person to befriend either Elizabeth or her children. It was in those homes where she had once been a most gracious benefactor that Elizabeth now met with the most bitter words. Such ingratitude must have been harder to bear than the cruelty of her brother-in-law. Like

our Lord, she had not where to lay her head and when she came unto her own they received her not.

On and on trudged the weary women with the poor little children through the darkness and cold in their fruitless search, until at last they came to a dirty and ruinous tavern. Here they finally persuaded the inn-keeper to make room for them in a corner of an out-building where he stored his utensils and kept his swine. These he drove out that he might give their place to her royal highness, the Princess of Hungary, and in this lowly bed she put her royal children to sleep. How like Blessed Mary and St. Joseph who found no room in the inn for the little Lord Jesus and so were fain to lodge in the stable!

To add to their misery and fear, the tavern was full of drunken men, cursing, swearing and gambling. They made the night hideous with their profane revelry. Toward midnight, the hour of prayer which Elizabeth had always so much loved because then the little Lord Jesus had come to earth in silence and humility, the roistering grew worse, and the little group of unprotected women and children feared to stay longer. But suddenly there rang in their ears a note of hope. They heard the sweet-toned bell of the Church of the Friars

Minor ringing for Mattins. This was a church Elizabeth had founded during Louis' lifetime. Gladly did she and her family steal away in the darkness to the sure refuge of God's altar. She listened attentively as the Office was sung, and then asked the monks to intone the *Te Deum* as a thanksgiving to God for having raised her, though so unworthy, to this state of holy poverty. Surely here we have the very climax of her heroic patience and unconquerable hope. Never was there a braver deed than the outcast Elizabeth singing her thanks while her heart was breaking.

We are told that she said: "Oh Lord, Thy holy will be done. Yesterday I was a Landgravine, with houses and castles many: to-day I am a beggar woman, to whom no one will give a night's lodging. Lord, if I had served Thee better in my sovereign estate, and had done greater alms for Thy love, my heart would rejoice thereat this day; but alas! it has not been so."

All that night she remained in prayer, her agony increasing hourly at the sight of her helpless children suffering so intensely from hunger and the bitter cold. As soon as morning came this royal pauper started out bravely in search of food and lodging. By pawning the few jewels she had on her person she obtained

a little food and after she had wandered a long time through the city streets, an old priest, very poor himself, took pity on her. Braving the wrath of the Landgrave Henry, he offered her a shelter and beds of straw, and entertained her as well as his great poverty permitted.

No sooner was she comfortably settled than she heard a violent knocking and a tumult of angry voices at the door. Her persecutors had discovered her hiding place. Elizabeth realized she could no longer remain without bringing trouble to the poor priest, and once again she led her children into the cold of the streets.

Then a nobleman, moved more by jealousy and by contempt of Henry's order than by any motive of charity, secretly invited Elizabeth to take refuge in his castle. She accepted gratefully for her children's sake, but quite to her surprise he showed her to a narrow, barren chamber, the poorest in the whole house. Everyone from the lord and his wife down to the meanest servant treated her with the same rudeness and contempt that they would have shown to a degraded woman of the streets. She was refused any food or fuel whatsoever. After a night spent in this prison Elizabeth knew she could not stay here any longer without endangering the lives of her dear little ones.

"O walls," she said as she was leaving, "I thank you for having protected us against wind and rain during the past night. I would also from my heart thank your master, but in truth I know not for what."

She turned back once more to the miserable tavern; it was the only place her enemies did not envy her. The greater part of the following days and many nights as well, she spent in the churches. "From these at least," she would say, "no one can drive me, for these are God's holy dwellings, and He alone is my Host."

It was the sufferings of her dear children that caused Elizabeth most pain. Of herself she said, "I have merited this, I deserve to see them thus, and I repent sincerely. But my children are born of a royal race, and behold them hungry, and without even a bed to lie on. My heart is pierced with sorrow on their account; as for me, my God, Thou knowest that I am unworthy of being raised by Thee to this blessed state of Holy Poverty."

As if in answer to her unceasing prayer, some kind friend whose name is now unknown, offered to assume the charge of the little ones, and they were taken away from her and concealed separately in distant places. The pain of this, her first, separation from them was sof-

tened by the knowledge that they at least were being properly cared for. Assured of their safety she at once became resigned to her own fate. Like any ordinary poverty-stricken widow she began to earn her living by spinning, and when work failed, she begged. There seems to have been only one habit of her former life that she retained. She never failed to set aside some part of her meagre meals to share with the poor people she met.

3

Elizabeth's sweetness, heroism and patience should have excited the admiration of the hard-hearted inhabitants of Eisenach, and restored their gratitude. On the contrary there is not one trait of sympathy or compassion toward her recorded. Among the many to whom Elizabeth the Duchess had often personally ministered was an old beggar woman. One day when Elizabeth the Pauper was crossing a muddy stream she met this same old woman who now not only refused to make way for her on the stepping stones but rudely pushed her full length into the muddy water, calling out, "Lie there where thou hast fallen. Whilst thou wert duchess thou wouldst not live as one. Now thou art poor and lying in the mud, and I will not help to lift thee." But Elizabeth was

learning lessons in the hard school of the Holy Cross. She picked herself up, laughing merrily and saying to God, "This is for the gold and precious stones I wore long ago."

What were Elizabeth's thoughts in these tragic days? There were moments of discouragement when she was tempted to doubt everything. But Elizabeth was a heroic soul. She had courage, tenacity, perseverance. Very far from the truth is the idea that saints are pale, anaemic creatures. For tales of red-blooded heroism the *Acta Sanctorum* have no equal.

Some one has said that there can be no such thing as Christian hope till everything is hopeless. When things are hopeful it is perfectly natural to hope. When things seem hopeless, then we can turn to God in expectation of His mercy and can pray with the Psalmist, "Lord, let me not be disappointed of my hope." "We are saved by hope," says St. Paul. It was a characteristic virtue of our saint. It has always been a constant mark of Catholics and of the Catholic Church. The success of the Catholic Movement amongst us is largely conditioned by this one factor.

Whether or not we will exercise hope is a mere matter of choice to the baptized person. In the first and greatest of sacraments, faith, hope and charity are infused into the soul. All

the baptized thus have hope. We can exercise it when we choose. He who loves and trusts God will confidently exercise it when all things seem hopeless. To do otherwise is to fault God who has promised that all things work together for good to them that love Him. When we give way to discouragement we are insulting the good God. What more can He do for us than He has done? Elizabeth was certainly not one of these doubters. In her hour of trial we see the fruit of her penances and prayers. There is a marvellous well-spring of supernatural strength in her soul which carries her triumphantly through her sorrows.

In the thirteenth century news travelled very slowly and it was some time before any of Elizabeth's influential relatives knew of her troubles. The first to hear was her aunt Matilda, a sister of Queen Gertrude of Hungary and the abbess of the Monastery of Kitzingen. It is said that the Duchess Sophia, shamed at her son's rapacity, secretly sent Dame Matilda word of Elizabeth's sad plight. The good abbess at once dispatched two carriages to Thuringia to seek for her niece and the children with instructions to bring them to her. Elizabeth was as much pleased at the prospect of reunion with her children as at deliver-

ance from her own misery. Accompanied by her ever-faithful companions, Guta and Isentrude, she set out immediately for the convent.

The days she passed here in the peaceful calm after the storm were very happy ones. Elizabeth often said that if it were not for her children she would gladly enter the community as a simple religious. No doubt she would have chosen to make her home with these nuns permanently but God's good providence would have her a wandering pilgrim to perfect her in her vocation to poverty, and she presently received a new summons.

4

The Bishop of Bamberg, a brother of the Abbess Matilda, and consequently Elizabeth's uncle, no sooner heard of the predicament that she was in than he insisted on her coming to his diocese to live. Leaving her second daughter Sophia at the convent to be educated, Elizabeth set out obediently for Bamberg. Her uncle had selected the Castle of Botenstein for her especial use, and this he furnished in a manner suitable for a duchess. Elizabeth and her companions soon became once again accustomed to their old manner of life, and for a time events moved as peaceably as any one could have wished. But if Elizabeth hoped

that at last her afflictions were ended, she was soon disappointed.

The old Bishop was a clever man, and after Elizabeth had been with him a short time he realized that his niece was a very marriageable person. She was very beautiful and only twenty years old. The emperor Frederick II, the greatest secular prince in the world, had been long a-wife hunting. The Bishop put two and two together and conceived the project of a marriage. The morning he came to this conclusion he did not wait until Elizabeth had breakfasted before he communicated it to her.

"Now, my dear, you will have for a husband a lord far more illustrious and powerful than Louis," he concluded.

The usually meek and docile Elizabeth must have given her uncle quite a surprise when she very sweetly but forcibly replied that she would ever remain single, the better to serve God. The good Bishop was nettled. He remonstrated. He argued. He reminded her of her beauty, her youth and the danger of persecution being renewed. Once in the grave he could not defend her, though he promised to leave her the Castle of Botenstein. Elizabeth wavered not one whit.

"Sire, I had for lord a husband who most tenderly loved me. I shared his honour and

his power. I had much of riches, jewels and the pleasures of the world. I had all these, but I learned what you, my lord, know full well, that the joys of this earth are worthless. For this reason I wish to abandon the worldly life and to pay to God what I owe Him, the debts of my soul. Sire, I am eager to join the followers of our blessed Lord. I ask but one thing on earth. I have two children, my son Hermann and my eldest daughter, who are destined for the worldly life. I would be grateful to God if He would care for them."

The Bishop was a mighty man of war and of the world, and Frederick was still more powerful. Hence the humble widow was by no means sure that her victory was lasting. Placing herself especially under the protection of the Queen of Virgins, she redoubled her prayers and penances that she might not be forced to break her vow of chastity. She dared not plead the fact of her vow to her uncle, for he would insist on a dispensation since it was but a simple and private vow, and not the solemn vow of which the Church recognizes no such dispensation.

5

In the midst of this new crisis messengers reached Bamberg with the good news that the

Crusaders were on their way homeward, bringing Louis' reliques with them, and that they had already reached southern Germany. The description of this funeral procession gives a touching insight into the customs of the middle ages. The bones of Louis, encased in a rich coffin, formed the center of the procession. Every night the knights stopped near some church or monastery, and the bier was placed in state before the altar while devout watchers chanted the Office of the Dead and other devotions. The march was not resumed until the next morning after a requiem mass had been said for the repose of the good Prince's soul. Travelling thus with the greatest solemnity, the Crusaders crossed Italy and southern Germany.

As soon as the Bishop received the warning of their approach he assembled all the clergy and the religious of neighbouring monasteries. Accompanied by an immense number of nobles, school children and the other faithful people, they went out to meet the knights and to join their procession. At the cathedral the coffin was opened, and Elizabeth was permitted to look on the reliques of her holy and knightly husband. At this moment all the anguish she had felt at his death was renewed, and it was not until she had made many fervent acts of

resignation to God's will that comfort and peace were restored to her.

"O my God," she prayed, "Thou knowest how I loved this husband. Thou knowest that I would prefer him to all the delights of this world if Thy goodness permitted it. Thou knowest that with him I would be willing to spend my life in misery, and to beg my bread with him from door to door throughout the whole world, solely to have the happiness of being by his side, if Thou didst will it, O my God! Now I resign myself and him to Thy Divine pleasure, and I would not, even if I could, purchase him back again at the price of a single hair of my head, unless it was agreeable to Thee, my good God!"

Righteous anger broke loose among the Crusaders when they heard the tale of Henry's cruel conduct toward their gentle Duchess. The indignant knights declared they would always regard her as their lady and mistress and defend her against all. It is a strange coincidence that at their head was the young Lord de Varila, a son of him who sixteen years ago had made such a similar promise to the little Princess' father. Led by him they all made a solemn vow over the coffin to right the wrongs done to Elizabeth and her children, and to settle with the usurper Henry.

When the mournful procession set out for the last time, Elizabeth and her companions accompanied it. The news of their approach created a great sensation in Thuringia. Not only the Duchess-Mother Sophia and her sons, Henry and Conrad, but also the counts, lords and knights of the country, together with an immense number of people, rich and poor, all hastened to the Abbey of Reinhartsbrunn to pay the last honours to their good Prince. Several bishops and abbots came to testify their respect for this champion of the Church and the Holy Sepulchre. The monks went out to meet the body of their faithful protector chanting psalms and hymns. Perhaps a great number of the throng came to see their relatives and friends among the surviving Crusaders, but without a doubt curiosity as to what had become of the much-talked-of Elizabeth attracted some. The last funeral rites of the dead Duke were celebrated in the abbey church at Reinhartsbrunn, his chosen burial place, and at his coffin, Sophia, Elizabeth, Henry and Conrad were united in common sorrow.

6

Immediately after the funeral services Elizabeth's defenders met in deliberation as to the best way to deal with Henry without using any

force, for she had especially forbidden that. They finally chose a committee of four charged with the duty of remonstrating with Henry in the name of all. Lord de Varila was selected as their spokesman, and his eloquence and boldness in pleading his lady's cause astonished all who heard him. Sophia soon burst into loud weeping, and rose from her place, wringing her hands. Then tears came to Elizabeth's eyes. Soon all the women present were sobbing.

"For God's sake, cease your weeping!" exclaimed the spokesman. "Do you princes listen to me a little longer. It is a time for action, not for weeping. Right the wrongs of this tearful widow and her fatherless children. Turn from evil counsel and make amends."

God used these words to touch the heart of Henry which had been so insensible to justice or charity. Both he and his brother Conrad who had been a partner in all these crimes, repented bravely, fully and publicly, and promised never to listen again to evil counsellors. Henry also gave full power to the knights to dispose of his life and all his possessions, and asserted that he would willingly do all Elizabeth should require, openly begging her forgiveness.

The rights of the children were given first

attention, especially those of the lad Hermann who was declared lawful heir to the duchy, though the regency during his minority was given over into the hands of his eldest uncle who was Henry. These arrangements all completed, Elizabeth set out for that Wartburg from which she had been so cruelly expelled.

Henry may have been forced into his concessions partly through fear but he remained faithful to his promises and made complete reparation, though after Elizabeth's death he again mistreated the young Hermann, as we shall see. He now restored all the honours due to his sister-in-law's rank. In doing so, however, he could not refrain from saying, and quite truly too: "If my sister Elizabeth owned the whole empire of Germany, none of it would she retain for herself, but would give it all away for the love of God."

When Elizabeth first heard the conditions which the knights threatened to impose on Henry she had cried out: "I want neither his castles nor his riches nor anything that would tend to trouble or distract me; but I would be grateful to him if he would give me what is due of my dower that I may defray the expenses of what I wish to do for the salvation of my own soul and the repose of that of my beloved husband."

Now that she was once more mistress of her fortune she went back to her old habits. She completed the foundation of a hospital which she had planned during Louis' lifetime. She frequented the company of the very poorest and lowest. She completely forgave and forgot the ingratitude of those former recipients of her benefactions. More than this, she practised voluntary poverty in its highest degree. It was as though, once having tasted the joys of Holy Poverty, nothing on earth could take its place in her heart. Freed by her widowhood from the necessity of going into court society, she avoided all its frivolous entertainments, and the extra time thus gained she devoted entirely to prayer and contemplation.

The court lords and ladies shook their heads. "Surely," they said, "this is a mad woman and a fool." But they did not know that there is a foolishness which is wiser than all the wisdom of men, and a madness that is divine. She wished to make of herself "a fool for Christ's sake," and such foolishness is sublime.

VII

ELIZABETH, THE PENITENT OF MARBURG

Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance. St. Luke 3, 8.

I rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his Body's sake, which is the Church. Col. 1, 24.

So then death worketh in us but life in you. II Cor. 4, 12.

1

THE names of the Seraph of Assisi and the royal Saint of Hungary have become inseparably linked wherever the Third Order of St. Francis is known. Even in the thirteenth century when mountains were barriers and news travelled by word of mouth, these two, although they never saw each other, were nevertheless intimately associated by identity of ideals and purpose. It was in 1207 that Francis became enamoured of Lady Poverty and for her exchanged his world of wealth and pleasure. This same year the Princess Eliza-

beth was born into a world of kings, castles and gold. Between the two so widely separated by distinctions of society as well as by physical distances, there came to be one common bond. This was an irresistible fascination for Holy Poverty and the Poor Christ. While the one ministered to paupers from his very poverty, the other shared with them her royal wealth. Years passed and then Francis' friars pushed their way northward to Germany. What could be more fitting than that this same Princess should be their sponsor?

It was from these friars that Elizabeth first learned of Francis. How eagerly she must have listened while they repeated the story of the young Bernardone who had been the leader in all the maddest festivities of the young Assisians. They told how one day a mysterious voice called him, "Francis! go rebuild My Church which, as thou seest, is falling into ruin," and how he defied his father who attempted to stop him. Stripping himself of the last remnant of earthly splendor, he donned the grey tunic of a common peasant and then burst into song. He must needs share these very clothes from his back with the first beggar he met, he burned so with love. Even the birds—little sisters he called them—hovered over his shoulders while he spoke in glowing

terms to them of the love of their Creator. The fierce Brother Wolf became tame at his touch. Human beings too felt this same magnetic attraction, and everywhere that Francis went people gathered around him begging him to teach them the secret of holy joy.

The mere mention of the name of Francis of Assisi suggests an atmosphere of love. This was the gentle saint, the "Christ of the Umbria." We think of his friendship with all nature, his Brother Sun, Sister Water and Brother Fire. His was a life of peace with all the universe. Franciscan cheerfulness has become proverbial. Of necessity there must be suffering, but it is to be made sweet out of love for Christ crucified. Lastly and most commanding of all there is the sweeping dedication to poverty. Such were the chief characteristics of St. Francis himself. Such were the ideals which formed the basis of the new Order.

Then too there was the story of the Lady Clare, and how one night she fled secretly from her father's mansion, how Francis sheared her hair and clothed her in the coarse grey, and how she clung fearlessly to the altar and defied her pursuing relatives to tear her away from her Divine Lover. In an incredibly short time women from all ranks of society had begged admission to this new branch of Francis' fam-

ily, and soon there were Poor Clare convents scattered over all southern Europe.

More than this, Elizabeth learned of the existence of the Third Order. Many there were who had come to Francis begging to be allowed a share in his life of holy joy, but who had no vocation whatsoever to be a friar or a nun. Some of these were kings who must bear the responsibilities of a nation; soldiers who must fight battles in the cause of justice; merchants who must carry on the give and take of commercial life; mothers with children to rear. Since God had called these people to a life in the world, they must stay in the world, but Francis was not the man to turn souls away empty-handed. He conceived the project of providing them with an Order all their own. They were to be the Penitents of the Third Order. They were to be sharers of holy joy with the friars and Claresses, for they were to carry the life of poverty, penance, and prayer with them back to their courts, battlefields, shops, or schools. Here there was a place for souls from every rank of society. There was a place for the Duchess Elizabeth, and acting on the advice of her confessor, Friar Rodinger, and with the full consent of her husband, she was received into the Third Order, becoming the first Franciscan tertiary in Germany.

2

However, we speak of Elizabeth as a penitent not only because she belonged to the Order of Penitents but also because she was a penitent in the fullest sense of the word. Unlike most of us, few were the sins of which she had to repent, yet like our Lord Who was the Divine Penitent doing penance on the cross for all mankind, Elizabeth voluntarily undertook penances that she might make reparation for the sins of other people as well as for her own.

To such a person it was appropriate that God should give that sweet gift which theologians have called "the gift of tears." Very early in life she received this grace. To the minds of most of us tears are a sign of meanspiritedness. Not so in Bible times. "Put my tears in Thy bottle," says the Psalmist. It was the custom then for a person to preserve the tears of a faithful friend in a bottle as a symbol of love and charity. This "blood of the soul," as St. Augustine calls it,—this "water of the heart," as other writers have termed it, is in simple and pious souls a tender and silent offering of prayer and homage which unites them to the suffering of our Lord and His saints.

Our own age has lost that sweet childlikeness which characterized former ages, and with it

we have also lost simplicity in religion. There is much talk of "simple services." Parishes which affect such services are usually most lacking in simplicity. Simplicity is never simplicity when it is studied and artificial. It must come from the heart. Most people imagine that a service of worship is simple when it proceeds haphazardly, without attention or regulation as to ceremonial correctness. We forget that ceremonial can become in religion, as in secular life, a second nature to us, so that through it we really express the innermost convictions of the soul. Is it a lack of simplicity for a lad to tip his hat to a lady? How then can it be a lack of simplicity for a lad to bend his knee to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament? The fact is that anything and everything can be and should be a means of prayer. We pray by genuflecting. We pray by making the sign of the cross. Mere kneeling quietly in church, saying nothing, but hushing the soul in the presence of God, is a most beautiful and helpful act of prayer. And certainly the tears of the saints, like the holy tears of pity which Jesus shed over Jerusalem and at the grave of Lazarus, have always gone up before God as an act of loving worship and intercession. Chief among those who have had this gift of tears was the Seraphic Father Francis in whose

footsteps St. Elizabeth was striving to follow. Indeed St. Francis wept so often over the sufferings of his Crucified Lord that he became nearly blind toward the end of his life.

3

When Francis received his boyhood friend, the merchant Luchesius of Poggibonzi, together with his wife Bonadonna, as the first members of the new association, he gave them only a few oral directions as to the manner of life they were henceforth to live. The rapid growth of the Order soon made it necessary for him to write a definite rule. Twelve hundred twenty-one, the date of its publication, is usually recognized as the year of foundation. This rule established a religious confraternity which, while it was not a monastic Order, was still recognized as a real Order by the Church because of its ideals, customs, rule, habit and life. As we shall see, it was to be Elizabeth's contribution to this Franciscan ideal to add to it the vows of religion, making it now consist of tertiaries-secular and tertiaries-regular. For this reason she is sometimes considered the Patroness of the religious of the Third Order, and to St. Louis of France is then assigned the patronage of the Third Order Secular.

Francis' original plan was for his Penitents

to return to the fervent, primitive practices of the Apostolic Church. In proportion as popularity had replaced sufferings and struggles for the faith, just in that proportion had laxity and abuse crept in, and the thirteenth century Church was one of greedy prelates, lax clergy, worldly people.

As this little volume is addressed more especially to the friends of the American Congregation of Franciscans, it perhaps would not be amiss to sketch briefly the inspiring spiritual philosophy which underlies the Franciscan ideal as it is found in each of the three Orders of St. Francis.

The spirit of St. Francis is the spirit of love. Like the holy Seraphim he was aflame with love from contemplation of God. The Franciscan vocation is first of all to contemplation. Love is to be the motive of their lives, love for Jesus and love for souls, and this love is born of prayer.

To St. Francis, poverty was only another form of love, the form which Love Incarnate took when He would redeem the world. The poverty of St. Francis was not separate from his love; it was his love, causing him to give himself in pity for the world as God gave. Because the world had exchanged its possession of God for the possession of material

things, the Lord Jesus, when He became Man, came in poverty, to teach men that the possession of God in this world is the sole source of happiness, satisfaction and joy. Poverty is therefore the possession of God, in Whom we have all things.

St. Francis loved, and gave up all things for that love, and in poverty he found this greatest of possessions, that he was God's and that God was his, and that his life was filled with holy joy. It is true to say that any of these three, love, poverty or joy, is the spirit of St. Francis, since these three are bound up in each other; for love leads to poverty, poverty leads to the possession of God, and the possession of God leads to the fulness of joy. Wherefore St. Francis says of poverty, "Cleave steadfastly to it, my best beloved brethren, and for the sweet name of our Lord Jesus Christ, never desire to possess ought else under heaven."

In the pages of the Holy Gospel God's love for man is especially manifested by Jesus in the Manger, Jesus on the Cross, and Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and we know from the history of Franciscan devotion that the Manger, the Cross and the Tabernacle were to St. Francis, and after him to all the Saints of the Franciscan family, the particular manifestations of divine love upon which they dwelt

with continuous contemplation. This was so because these three manifestations of divine love exemplify to us the three-fold Franciscan spirit of poverty, penance and prayer.

St. Francis burned with love toward Jesus, and for His sake, with love toward the world for which Jesus died. It was love that made both Jesus and Francis poor, and Theirs was a poverty that even gave up self to crucifixion in pity for that which They loved. The poverty of Jesus is best exemplified by His humility and complete abandonment to our needs as the Holy Babe of Bethlehem.

But the manger was only the beginning of His poverty. It reached its highest expression in His Sacrifice of Himself for us on the Cross. The Franciscan life is not only one of poverty. It is also a life of penance, that is, of the dedication of oneself to God for the salvation of the world in union with Christ's offering of Himself upon the Cross. From such a life of dedication to God in penance will spring a life of activity for the conversion of the world. Franciscans look upon themselves as victims, living, suffering, and dying to the same end that Jesus lived, suffered and died. Hence they are called not only to contemplation, but to certain forms of activity for the salvation of souls; for their

vocation is to be like Jesus. He made Himself an offering, a victim, offered to His Father in prayer and by prayer, in poverty and by poverty, in suffering and by suffering. His suffering or penance began by His redemptive labours for souls and culminated in the great Sacrifice of Redemption on Calvary. Any work done in the world must be done in the Spirit of the Crucified. The battle cry in the holy warfare, like His, will always be, "Not My will but Thine be done." The task is, not to accomplish a visible success any more than our Saviour did, but to fulfill a vocation.

But the exaltation of Christ on the Cross issued in His exaltation in heaven. Penance is the best preparation for prayer, since it purifies us and unites us more closely to Jesus, Who is always in our midst in the Sacrament of His love as the centre of the life of contemplation. Hence we see that even as love is born of prayer, and leads to a life of poverty, even so poverty leads to a life of penance, and penance leads back again to a life of prayer. The Franciscan vocation then is to love, which is born of prayer; a two-fold love, love for Jesus and love for souls. Love is the motive power of the Franciscan life, and this love leads to a life of dedication to God in poverty, which further expresses itself in pen-

ance and in prayer. Penance is the penitential aspect of poverty just as prayer is the contemplative aspect of it.

4

St. Francis did not set out to found an Order. He wished merely to give himself to God, but he did this so well that God was able to use him for great things. Soon he finds a band of men gathered about him. Then he conceives the idea of re-conquering for Christ His lost world but he would use Christ's own weapons, humility and love, and so he wishes to become "the *Minor*," the least of men. His followers are therefore called the lesser brethren or the Order of Friars Minor, and since the world has been lost by trusting in itself, he would make it impossible for his friars to do other than trust in God. So he makes them beggars, and thus they come to be completely dependent upon the loving care of God as expressed through the giving of alms. To the Franciscan alms are sacramental. They manifest "the love of the brethren" which still exists so boundlessly in God's Church even though there may be much uncharity there also. Francis, "the glorious beggar of Christ," gave the world an astounding example of the *folly of the Cross* and "the more that sublime fool de-

graded himself, to the end that by humility he might become the vessel of love, the more eagerly disciples pressed to follow his footsteps."

The Friars Minor then exemplify in a general way the Franciscan vocation to the threefold spirit of poverty, penance and prayer; the Poor Clares especially emphasize poverty in its contemplative aspect of prayer; and the tertiaries, whom St. Francis called the Brethren and Sisters of Penance, and who are also termed "the Penitents of St. Francis," emphasize the penitential aspect of poverty in a life of good works in the world.

It is a complete misunderstanding of the Franciscan vocation to say that it is an active vocation rather than a contemplative vocation. Was not the Lord Christ a contemplative? Were not His Holy Apostles also? The Franciscan Order is an apostolic Order and its life is to imitate the life of Jesus on earth. The Franciscan then is a contemplative called to certain active works for souls, and the enclosed Poor Clare is quite as much an active worker for souls, an apostle, as the friar or tertiary. She works for souls by prayer and reparation, and much of the success of the Franciscan working in the world is undoubtedly due to the spiritual force placed at his serv-

ice by the hidden apostle in the Poor Clare cloister.

5

The world had exchanged its God for idols of pleasure and money. Francis saw that voluntary poverty was the only logical solution to this idol worship. Therefore his Penitents were to be frugal in eating and drinking. They were to avoid extravagance in dressing and shun objectionable amusements and pleasures. Because coldness and laxity made up the common attitude toward the Christian religion, they were to observe all the precepts of the Church strictly and fervently. Because hatred was a predominant passion of the age, they were to strive to practise charity not only in their home life and toward their brother Franciscans, but also in their dealings with all their fellow men. To give unity to this heterogeneous mass there must be a system of monthly reports and dues, and where possible regular gatherings. To release serfs from the clutches of lords and their petty, feudal wars, Penitents were forbidden to take oaths or carry weapons. To prevent any quarrels over their property after death they were to make timely wills. And note that although these common ties linked all members into one large family, yet unlike modern socialistic associations, individualism

was carefully guarded. There must be distinctions of various stations in life, for such are divinely ordained. To rebel against them is to rebel against divine vocation. And so among Francis' Penitents, kings were to remain kings and serfs, serfs, but the king and the serf were to be brothers.

That the Third Order exerted a profound influence over the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries is a recognized historical fact. High and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned found themselves on a common footing in the ranks of the Third Order. This was an important factor in lessening class distinctions and dissensions, then so pronounced. It is universally admitted that tertiaries were responsible for the breaking up of feudalism and its attendant evils. St. Francis little dreamed when he ordained those passages concerning oaths and weapons in his Third Order Rule that from those very restrictions was to come power sufficient to change the political structure of the age.

The following words written to Frederick II by his chancellor show well the attitude of public opinion toward Franciscan and Dominican tertiaries. "The Friars Minor and the Friars Preacher have risen in hatred against us. They have publicly assailed our mode of life and our

enterprises; they have destroyed our rights and set our influence at naught. To undo our power completely they have founded two new brotherhoods which embrace persons from every station in life both of men and women. Everybody is hastening to be received into them and it is hardly possible to find a family not represented by one or the other."

It is a startling fact that no less than one hundred and forty crowned heads of Europe have worn the habit of the Penitents of St. Francis, besides countless princes and persons of noble rank. Mention of a dozen or so names taken at random from the Franciscan tertiary annals may give some idea of the various types of sanctity produced by the Order and of the elasticity of a rule that will lend itself to every-day life under such varying conditions. The first place must of course be given to St. Louis, the King-Saint of France, who ranks by the side of Francis and Elizabeth as the patron of all tertiaries. A century later there is St. Elizabeth, Queen of Portugal, who followed nobly in the steps of her great-aunt, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, for whom she was named. From the humbler walks of life are Bd. Pica, Francis' own mother, and St. Margaret of Cortona who is the St. Mary Magdalene of the Franciscan Order. St. Francis

Xavier, the missionary, and St. Francis de Sales, the marvellous director of souls, both adopted their name saint as their patron and followed his Third Order Rule. The old rhyme "As I was going to St. Ives," is charmingly reminiscent of Franciscanism, for St. Ives himself was a tertiary, perhaps the greatest priest-tertiary until St. Charles Borromeo, the reformer. In this company we must also name the holy priest of Ars, St. John Baptist Vianney. Who can say what strength may have come to St. Joan of Arc, the warrior maid of France, through her Third Order affiliation? Dante, the divinely-inspired poet, Raffael and Michelangelo, the world's masters in art, and Liszt and Gounod, the leaders in the realm of music, all were sons of St. Francis. Nor can we forget our own Brother Christopher Columbus of the Third Order, who is immortally depicted on the Capitol doors at Washington, surrounded by the friars who were his comrades on his voyages of discovery to America.

Such then was the Order to which Elizabeth had pledged her loyalty and her obedience, and which in turn had supplied her with supernatural strength sufficient for the needs of wife and mother, duchess and pauper in striking succession.

Now that Henry had made full restitution

for his shameful treatment of his sister-in-law and had reinstated her in the Wartburg, Elizabeth found herself once more a titled lady. Her sole responsibilities were the interests of her little children, her sole worries the wants and distresses of her afflicted poor. Works of mercy were the only demands on her time, the rest she was free to give to God in the contemplation of things divine. The death of Louis had freed her from the necessity of attending social functions always so distasteful to her. True, tongues might wag in criticism, but she was no longer subject to the old open insults. She might well have argued, as many others have done under similar circumstances, that she had done her bit of suffering for God. It was now His turn to take care of her, and since the lot had fallen to her in a fair ground, she would begin to take things easy. Such a philosophy of life is very comfortable, but it never has made and never will make a saint. Elizabeth had been privileged to taste the rich joys of poverty, and she soon grew restless under this life of ease and luxury. She thirsted for the sweetness that can be bought only at the price of suffering for Jesus.

We have spoken often of the penances and mortifications of St. Elizabeth. Perhaps they may have seemed fruitless and foolish. Cer-

tainly penance is a doctrine little preached and much misunderstood today. Yet "the reproach of Christ" must be borne by every Franciscan since his vocation is to be "like Jesus." The world hates the Cross no less now than when it was crucifying Christ. It tries to cover up the reproach of Christ by pretending that His Cross means something else than it does and by denying or obscuring the necessity of suffering for sin. Hence the spiritual joy that results from mortification is so much lacking these days, and our religious life has no power. The teaching of the Holy Gospel concerning the Cross is, first, that Christ did penance for sin and, secondly, that we ourselves may be saved from sin only on condition that we also do penance for our sins in the spirit of the Cross. Our first work, as Christ's was, is to do penance, and all religious are especially called to offer themselves to do penance not merely for their own sins but for the sins of the whole world. Our Lord said, "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish."

Let it never be forgotten that repentance is not only contrition and confession but also satisfaction, or the doing of works of penance, as it is written, "Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance," that is, of course, cease from works of evil, but more than this, make satis-

faction to the justice of God. To do penance, our sins must first be forgiven, and hence the need for frequent confession, for unforgiven sin merits eternal punishment, but forgiveness sets us free to perform the temporal punishment which must be paid either here or in purgatory for every sin which God forgives.

St. Paul said, "I fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ," thus teaching men to do penance for themselves and on behalf of their fellow men. Or again he says, "So then death worketh in us but life in you," thus teaching us that our mortifications bring life to others. As prayer offered for others obtains God's help for them, so may our acts of penance. We never know to what degree our prayers bring good to others, and so we may not know to what extent our acts of reparation may help to expiate the sins of others and to bring them blessings. But this we do know. Any act of penance performed on behalf of another increases the accidental glory of God since it is done as an act of worship and out of love for Him. This was the spirit that underlay the corporal austerities of the Dear Saint and that gave her the gaiety and holy joy she always manifested. "Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted" is a saying that should teach us where the source of

comfort and happiness is to be found, not in our own will and pleasure but in penance which cleanses, inebriates and vivifies. Every ache of the heart or body is sent to us by the good God Who wishes to make us thus to share in the passion of Jesus and "to fill up that which is behind" in those sufferings. Jesus suffered for us, but those sufferings have no avail for us unless we suffer with Him in an effort to work out our own salvation. Strange, is it not, that so seldom is the doctrine of penance taught today in our pulpits? He who understands the most comfortable doctrine of penance is able to find happiness in everything in this life. To him there is no mystery of suffering.

6

After Elizabeth had lived in the castle of Wartburg for almost a year, she saw the utter impossibility of practising any great degree of detachment among the worldly associations there. If only she were far away from every last reminder of royalty and free to exercise her beloved poverty without any fear of scandalizing her pleasure-loving court! It is not likely either that the proud princes of the Wartburg found her presence among them very agreeable. Her mode of life was a constant

rebuke to them. It must have been highly satisfactory to both parties when Henry assigned to Elizabeth the city of Marburg, a residence admirably suited to her taste for retirement. Besides being picturesquely situated on the banks of the river Lahn and located in a secluded section of Thuringia, it had the added advantage of being very near to Master Conrad's home. The dependencies and revenues of the city were all granted to Elizabeth to provide for her necessities. With an eye to prudence her first official act as sovereign was to appoint officials who were to administer the laws in her name and to assume complete charge of the temporal affairs of government.

The people of Marburg were so eager to welcome their new sovereign that from the first moment of her arrival they lavished all manner of honours upon her. Elizabeth's profound humility could scarcely endure this, and, just as we would naturally expect her to do, she retired secretly to a little village about a league away. In order that she might be of no trouble to the poor village folk, she camped out in a deserted cabin, fallen almost to ruin. In this delightfully Franciscan retreat, roofed in by boughs of pine, the Princess said her prayers and prepared her scant meals with her own hands, thanking our Lord joyfully when He

allowed the smoke to injure her eyes a little. In the meantime she gave orders for her permanent home to be constructed nearby the Church of the Friars Minor in Marburg. This was to be a small house of clay and timber built on the order of a cabin—so that all might know it was not as a great Princess she had come to establish herself in her capitol, but as a humble widow. When the building was completed she left her retreat and went to live there with her four children and her ever faithful attendants, Guta and Isentrude.

One or two stories from this period of our Dear Saint's life will help us to perceive the real human person that still thought and worked underneath the austerities and religious conventionalities which surrounded her. One day there was a lack of towels for the poor who were being bathed and otherwise cared for. The walls of Elizabeth's own room had been decorated with linen hangings. Since the need was acute and time was pressing, she quickly pulled them down and deftly tore them up to make bath towels and bandages.

"How fortunate it is that we have these things to fall back on," she said to one of the assistants. However, this companion of the saint had apparently not yet arrived at the same degree of detachment, for she made

answer: "It may seem so to you, but we shall miss those nice hangings nevertheless."

On another occasion Elizabeth was having difficulties with her dear beggars when distributing alms. She was always careful in giving help to the poor not to give money in such profusion as to pauperize them. With wise discretion she often gave poor men tools, such as scythes and reaping hooks, so that they might work rather than beg for their living. In giving alms of any sort it was necessary to make the suppliants sit in a row and stay quietly in their places so that everything might be distributed carefully and without duplication. On the day in question her beggar-friends were restless and obstreperous. Finally in despair Elizabeth announced that she would take her scissors and shear every hair off the head of any woman who moved out of her place again. Shortly afterwards a very pretty girl with beautiful long hair was accused of having moved out of line. Elizabeth's heart failed her at the thought of disfiguring such beauty. But many of her clients were quite indifferent to the moral obligation of speaking the truth. So, when she perceived that they were already murmuring that their benefactress was showing favour to an impostor, Elizabeth seized the head of the young girl,

took a pair of scissors, and with a few snips very quickly sheared her head so that she looked like a boy. It was no sooner done than our Dear Saint discovered that the girl had not moved at all and that someone had falsely accused her of so doing. The girl was in tears and Elizabeth also. But on further investigation an interesting fact came to light. The young maiden had long felt an impulse to the religious life which she had never been able to follow because of her pet vanity over her beautiful hair. With Elizabeth's kind help she was soon enabled to follow her God-given vocation. She lived and died a holy religious. We are even told that she became one of the grey sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis who followed St. Elizabeth's rule and example. So does God overrule our mistakes to His glory if these have not proceeded from self-will.

VIII

ELIZABETH, THE DAUGHTER OF FRANCIS

Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ; put on the whole armour of God. Rom. 13, 14. Eph. 6, 11. Be clothed with humility. I St. Peter 5, 5.

1

"I WISH, Father Francis, that since the Duchess Elizabeth is full of your spirit you would leave her the same inheritance as did Elijah to his disciple Elisha."

As Cardinal Hugolino, the Lord Protector of the Franciscan Order, uttered these words he lifted the ragged old mantle from the shoulders of the Poor Man with a request that he send it to this daughter in far off Germany as a tribute to her zeal and devotion for poverty. Very little persuasion was necessary to induce St. Francis to do this, for he had heard many accounts of Elizabeth's heroic virtues and of her fidelity to his Order and his ideals. The fact that Francis accompanied his modest gift with a letter he himself had written goes to prove that he cherished special admiration for the Duchess whom he had so good a reason to call his daughter.

Elizabeth treated this token of affection from her spiritual patron with the greatest reverence. Familiar though she was with purple robes and jewelled crowns, this ragged grey thing was to become her most priceless possession. Whenever she had an especial favour to request of our Lord she threw it over her shoulders before beginning her prayers. Years later, when she renounced all personal property, she obtained permission to retain this symbolic mantle, and at her death she bestowed it on a friend as her most precious treasure.

In addition to the grey mantle there was another object which Elizabeth numbered among her spiritual treasures. This was a letter of commendation and encouragement from this same Hugolino, who was already, at the time of Elizabeth's last stay at the Wartburg, raised to the dignity of the papacy and was now Pope Gregory IX. He had heard stirring accounts of the young duchess' persecutions and of her heroism under her difficulties. In this letter he assured her of his special blessing and protection. He also counselled Master Conrad to take more care than ever in the spiritual direction of this chosen soul. This encouragement, added to the impulse of grace, stirred in Elizabeth an unquenchable desire for perfection.

2

For a long time Elizabeth had weighed in her mind the various courses she might take that would lead her on to the still greater detachment she so constantly craved. Her duties to her children made it impossible for her to enter a regular religious Order. Furthermore, the majority of communities of this age were very wealthy, and Elizabeth's most fervent devotion was to poverty. It appears that as yet there were no Poor Clare foundations in this section of Germany.

"If I could find a rule poorer than St. Clare's," she said, "I would embrace it to console myself for not being allowed to enter hers."

On account of her delicate constitution, Master Conrad steadfastly refused her permission to observe the Franciscan Rule in all its severity and to beg her bread from door to door, as did the blessed Francis and his companions. This life appealed to her as being the most perfect type of gospel perfection, and she resolved to imitate it as closely as possible. She was barred from receiving the blessings that come through observing the evangelical counsels of perfection in the religious life, but she did have her tertiary's Rule, and she conceived the project of adding to it the solemn vows of

obedience, chastity and absolute poverty. Such an act would give an irrevocable monastic character to the hitherto secular nature of the Third Order obligations by which she was bound.

Elizabeth waited in a fervour of prayer for that most solemn of all days, Good Friday. Then, in the Church of the Friars Minor, in the presence of her little children, a few friends and the friars, she laid her hands on the bare altar and stripped her soul of the last trace of self. She surrendered her will to God wholly and unconditionally by her promise of obedience to her Church, her director and her Holy Rule. In the beautiful words of the vow of chastity she consecrated every affection, every sense, to her Lord, and swore to love Him with her whole heart and, from henceforth, her children, her relatives, her dearest friends only in His love. But as the words concerning absolute poverty trembled on her lips Master Conrad interrupted her. He reminded her of her duties to the poor; of her responsibilities in regard to her husband's fortune; of her children's interests. Perhaps Master Conrad wished to exert his new authority over her; perhaps he realized that this question of poverty was the one vulnerable spot in Elizabeth's heart, and he chose this means to strengthen

her weakest point. At any rate Elizabeth sweetly surrendered in this matter what was dearest to her. Her vow renounced wealth only in spirit, though this included all rights to use it personally except under obedience. At the age of twenty-two there no longer remained anything for this princess to renounce.

While Master Conrad said Mass the Father Guardian of the friary cut off Elizabeth's hair and clothed her in the grey tunic and white cord, the holy habit of Francis and Clare. From this day to her death the Duchess of Thuringia knew no other costume, and to increase her humility she ever after went about barefoot. As if to obliterate the last trace of her former grandeur, she substituted on her seal the figure of a barefoot friar in place of her family armorial bearings.

It was thus that Elizabeth obtained for all future tertiaries who might wish to do so, the blessed privilege of vowing themselves solemnly to God. Thus did she raise St. Francis' Penitents from the state of an Order of secular rank to the rank of a religious Order. Truly does she deserve the love and honour of those called to follow in her steps, this patroness of Franciscan tertiaries.

There is yet one other incident closely related to this event which has exerted a most

profound influence in the development of the Third Order. Elizabeth's inseparable companion, Guta, had shared every cross, every bitter exile, every heartache in her dear mistress' life. Surely she deserved to share in this, her mistress' greatest joy. On the same Good Friday at the side of Elizabeth she too pronounced the sacred vows and received the grey habit. Thus some sort of community life must have grown up around Elizabeth in the little house in Marburg. As we shall see, Master Conrad's rulings soon deprived Elizabeth of this consolation of sympathetic companionship. Elizabeth's little company never developed into a regular religious community, but it is here that we find the first hints of the Tierceline nuns, the Tertiaries Regular or the Conventual Third Order.

The vocation of a tertiary is primarily a vocation to a life of activity in the world. Hence the Third Order Rule is suited admirably to the needs of a group of persons engaged in any external work of charity. Communities of men or women drawn together by a common rule, living a common life in the power of common prayer and all in the name of Lady Poverty—what marvellous things can they not do for God? We do but hope that some day God will raise up in our

own Communion many fervent tertiaries who after the glorious example of St. Elizabeth will add the vows of religion to their profession, banding themselves together as Tertiaries Regular to serve for God's greater glory, whether it be in hospitals for the dying, homes for cripples, institutions for the deaf and blind, schools for boys and girls, or other corporal and spiritual works of mercy, as has for long been the case in the Roman Church. The great penances and austerities of St. Elizabeth were the result of her own unusual passion for God, and are not a necessary part of the tertiaries' life. The special character of the Third Order Rule which makes it useful for active Orders is its simplicity and its adaptability to any kind of work.

3

Elizabeth's gift of herself on that Good Friday had been a whole burnt-offering, and God in return showered upon her many and unspeakable blessings. Then as if to prove her He demanded a great sacrifice. He made it necessary for Elizabeth to part with her children whom she loved more than life itself. Such a separation seems, on the surface, to have been unnecessarily cruel. Elizabeth's action has been interpreted to prove that either

she was a selfish creature with a heart of stone, or that the Church is a machine for stifling lawful human affections. But it is fatally easy to misjudge and to impute false motives, the more so since our own age, in spite of its having little conception of the sacredness of home-life, of which Elizabeth's age had a great deal, loves God too little to think that sacrifice for Him of what we hold most dear is ever justifiable, much less necessary.

Consider then certain worldly reasons which must have had weight with our Saint. A poor lone widow could not fit her children for the part which because of their birth and vocation they must play in that rough and tyrannical period. Justice and true mother love necessitated that she send them away from her to be trained and educated. Then, as now, children of the well-to-do were usually reared away from home. The castles and courts of great nobles were the military academies, like our American West Point. Convents and monasteries were the finishing schools and colleges of the age. If we cannot appreciate her motive of sacrifice, at any rate let us allow her the right which we give to modern parents to send their children off to school.

Two of Elizabeth's children, in accordance with that scriptural custom which is so conso-

nant with the Catholic spirit, and so contrary to the ugly modern selfish spirit, had been consecrated to God from their childhood. Her second daughter, Sophia, and the youngest, Gertrude, had been thus given to God and were now sent to convents to be reared from their youth in holy religion. Both became abbesses, revered for their piety and their ability to rule.

This seems quite foreign to our present ways, but if more children were dedicated as "Oblates" and encouraged from their youth to think of complete consecration to God as a normal, wholesome and happy life, and the happiest career for anyone fitted for it, there would be great religious and saints in our own day as there were then. Nowadays children are taught from youth up to desire the things of the world and to fit themselves to get as large a share of them as possible. Then if they turn out to be drunkards, or adulterers, or self-seeking and unscrupulous in character, it seldom occurs to parents to blame themselves for the seeds of evil which they had constantly sowed in the hearts of their children. At least in those days it was considered a pious duty to train some of the family for God if some of the children were to be given to the world.

In the thirteenth century there was, as we

have seen, much more discipline in family life than in the present age. If girls and boys could be married and have their future in the world more or less determined for them, as was the case with Elizabeth, and surely the entirely happy marriage she had proves that this method could be quite as successful as the modern method of leaving marriage to be more or less an accident of chance passion, why could not the same be done in regard to a career for God? At any rate the system seemed to work better than the modern one of leaving everything to the choice of the individual who is never neutral in his judgment of what is best for him. Marriage, celibacy, courtiership, political service—all these things were considered vocations, and children were dedicated to one or the other. For the most part it did not occur to them to rebel. Each one felt his duty to society to be greater than his own personal rights. Each one was taught to do what he could. It was a rough, virile age, and yet great statesmen, great religious, great queens, great scholars were produced in this way. Who are we to say that our system in this soft, selfish, disciplineless, and luxurious age is better? "By their fruits ye shall know them." What are the fruits of our own system? Divorce; shamelessness; the Church

languishing for workers; sacrifice for the cause of the Church almost unknown; worship neglected;—surely we cannot blame the methods of the ages of faith when we see how little our own much-vaunted civilization has produced. That there were also failures as a result of their system we know, but certainly "there were giants in those days" and by comparison our own generation seems a puny one in all but our commercial successes.

And note that if Louis and Elizabeth gave two of their children to God, they also destined two to carry on their name and rule their great estate. Their son, Hermann, was at this time six or seven years old. As heir to Duke Louis' possessions he must be trained in all the arts of war and politics. For this purpose he was sent to the castle of a wealthy and worthy nobleman for safe keeping until such time as he should be old enough to assume the reins of government. This same castle became in all probability the home of Elizabeth's other daughter, Sophia, already engaged to the young Duke of Brabant. Here it was that she received the training which made her into the prudent, brave and forceful Christian noblewoman which she afterwards became.

We may conclude that one motive in sending the children away was prudence and jus-

tice. Another undoubtedly was Elizabeth's unquenchable appetite for sacrifice. Her confessor showed her that she loved her children with a complete abandon quite contrary to that state of complete abandon to God upon which she had entered. Like Mary beneath the Cross, willing the death and sufferings of Jesus because He and His Father willed them, so Elizabeth, though it broke her heart, decided to relinquish her children and her deep personal interest in them. What a sacrifice this must have been. Can you imagine a love for God so compelling and a will so strong that she could make this sacrifice uncomplainingly?

4

Elizabeth became a woman of great prayer because she so faithfully used those means of prayer which God has given us in Holy Church. All prayer centers around the offering of the holy sacrifice of the altar. Consequently Elizabeth's chief devotion was attendance at holy mass. We can never love the Blessed Sacrament too much, assist at mass too frequently or make our communions too often. The Blessed Sacrament is the well of salvation out of which we are privileged to draw all the graces of the Sacred Heart. Most of us have just enough religion to make us miserable and

not enough to make us happy. God often calls us to more work but never to less prayer. For this reason when Elizabeth became the daughter of St. Francis by making her three-fold vow she was called both to more work and more prayer. She then assumed the duty of reciting the Divine Office. Ever since her childhood she had delighted in this lesser luminary of prayer. If the mass is the sun from which all light comes, then the Divine Office is the moon, faithfully reflecting the bright beams proceeding from this center of our prayer-system.

What a wonderful volume of prayer the Breviary is! Study it if you want to learn the secrets of the spiritual life. Here is the treasury filled with things new and old. The most ancient prayers are here, and each succeeding age has enriched them with new passages imperishably lovely. In this book something will be found for everyone—beautiful poetry; eloquent prose; sacred conundrums; witty riddles; even folk-song and doggerel; and all mingled with the most sublime aspirations after God that the human heart can utter.

As a tertiary Elizabeth had been obliged for some years to recite the Little Office of Our Lady, which is an accompaniment of the Divine Office, a bright-shining star, as it were, a constant companion to this glorious moon in

our solar system of prayer. Now she was to find in the greater Office a means not only of prayer but of discipline, instruction and moulding for the soul. The Holy Spirit Himself becomes our spiritual director when we take up seriously the recitation of the Divine Office. Through it He trains and forms in us that spirit of prayer, and that reverent attitude towards God and His world which Holy Church wishes her children to have. How much better Christians of leisure would be today if they would undertake at least in part the recitation of the Divine Office.

Among the miraculous events told of this period of Elizabeth's growth in prayer we must mention the constant companionship of our Lady who is said to have constituted herself the Dear Saint's novice mistress. Again and again, so it is said, she came in person to teach her novice wonderful things concerning the past, present and future. One remarkable revelation among many recorded in the Annals of the Franciscan Order must be set down here.

"Do not imagine," said our Lady, "that I received all these graces without any trouble on my part. I declare to thee that I never received a single grace from God without much labour, continual prayer, ardent desires, deep devotion, many trials, and many tears."

IX

ELIZABETH, THE SAINT OF GOD

Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. Acts 10, 4.

Lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. Arise my love, my fair one, and come away. Cant. 2; 11, 13.

Whoso overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, who shall go no more out; upon whom I will write the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God and My Own new Name. Rev. 3, 12.

1

IN the language of Franciscans, as we have seen, poverty and love are the same thing. Elizabeth's love and devotion at last found its perfect expression in her complete abandonment of all that she had held dear. When Master Conrad forbade her renouncing her property and denied her the privilege of begging her bread, she did the next best thing. She consecrated to the relief of the poor or the maintenance of charitable institutions all the revenues which she was obliged nominally to retain. This is in accordance with both the

Rule of the Friars Minor and the Poor Clares which say that if the subject is legally unable to renounce the family property, mere good will suffices.

Since she could not beg, she could at least obtain her food by the next most humble means. She began to earn her living by working with her hands. The occupation she chose was the humblest. She spun wool. Sometimes she was able to catch a few fish from the river on the banks of which the city of Marburg stood. These she would sell for a few farthings. And so because of her love for the poor, she went on inventing little contrivances to make her poverty as complete as possible.

Her clothing was such as would have delighted St. Francis himself. It was torn and patched. The mantle had become too short for her and was lengthened by goods of another color. Whenever she found scraps of cloth she would gather them up to mend the rents and burns. This darning she did with her own hands, although her biographer quaintly adds, "she did not well know how to sew."

Her food might be compared to her clothing in its poverty. Well or ill she prepared it herself. Nothing could have been coarser or simpler than her meals. If anyone brought her a

delicate dish, she would send it at once to some poor person without even so much as tasting it herself, made happy thus to bring pleasure to someone else. We may be sure she was never imprudent in her fasting. We are told she asked a physician to point out what the exact limits of her abstinence ought to be, lest by fasting too severely she should jeopardize her health and thus rob God of the service she could otherwise have given Him.

Next to poverty is penance, and the story of Elizabeth's penance, as we already know, is a long one. Great souls such as hers can never stop half way in their journey to God. Elizabeth could not have endured being a half religious.

And so she plotted and planned tiny hidden ways of getting a little more glory for God and a little more penance for herself. A favorite practice of hers was to perform the most menial of the household tasks, and that she might add a further mortification to self, she did them in secret so as not to attract attention and praise. Sometimes she would send her companions away on the slightest pretexts. When they returned, they would find their dishes washed for them or their floor all scrubbed.

Living an every-day life in peace and harmony with other imperfect and sometimes dis-

agreeable souls is a chiefest of penances. Elizabeth knew this. As long as she had Guta and Isentrude with her she had congenial companions, but Master Conrad, good at inventing methods of torture, sent these away, and saw to it that her companions were always the most unpleasant he could find. But she strove to make them charitable and happy, and when she failed to make them better, she tried to be made better herself by them.

There was to be no snobbishness in her little household. None, not even those of lowest birth, were to call her by any other title than by her baptismal name Elizabeth. Nor was idleness, which the Holy Rule of St. Francis calls the enemy of the soul, tolerated for an instant.

Her own hands were never idle, and thus she set her maidens the highest example. Often she was so ill in bed that her maids found it necessary to take away her spinning. Then she would demand some wool be brought to her that she might disentangle it and prepare it for future use.

One thing which she could not endure was for anyone to utter in her presence words of vanity, anger or impatience. She would always interrupt gently saying, "Well, where is our Lord now?"

2

Another penance, and one which has become almost synonymous with the name of Elizabeth of Hungary, was an entire forgetfulness of self in her charity for the sick and the poor. Her first care at Marburg was to arrange for the building of a hospital. This she placed under the protection of our St. Francis who had just been canonized. She enshrined in it a relic sent her by Gregory IX, one far more precious than the grey mantle, for it was some drops of blood from the wound in St. Francis' side where he had received the sacred stigma.

This hospital became the center for Elizabeth's works of mercy. She and her companions spent many hours each day nursing and consoling the patients. The most repulsive she selected to be her especial care. Of course we know that she wanted to comfort and console these wretched ones. But she also looked upon her works of mercy as a means of mortification. We must not forget this. It is hard to tell which was greater, Elizabeth's love for her neighbour or her hatred of the sins, imperfections and self-will which might separate her from her Saviour. Lepers, on account of the great danger of contagion, were especial objects of horror and therefore all the more to be cared for and loved by Elizabeth.

Once, while bathing one of these poor unfortunates, she felt herself giving away to feelings of disgust. To repress them immediately, she said to herself: "Ah, ugly mouth, so thou dislikest this. Know then that it is a salutary drink." With these words she drank the water she had used, a penance of which we may shudder to read, but the heroic courage of which we certainly cannot deny. Such is the spirit which makes saints, whereas our own feelings of superior refinement may perhaps be a delusion of self-love rather than a sign of greater wisdom. And she had been reared with greater pride of birth and station than we!

Master Conrad must have feared that her charity sometimes led her beyond the bounds of Christian prudence. Or perhaps he wished to mortify her the more. He forbade her to touch or kiss the sores of lepers lest she contract the disease. He told her not to make too intimate ministrations. But this prescription was a failure, for the grief it caused Elizabeth's compassionate heart was so great that she fell ill, and he removed the restriction.

Elizabeth did not confine her attentions to the sick in her hospital nor to the bodily needs of the poor. She never lost sight of the spiritual deprivations of souls. She carefully watched that little children be brought to bap-

tism and that the sick and dying receive the sacraments. Frequently she went to visit the poor in their little huts. When she found anyone bearing his sufferings with a greater degree of patience than usual, she brought him into her own home as a reward.

One of these was a paralytic boy, fatherless and motherless. Whole nights passed by while she watched at his bedside, giving him more than a mother's care. When he died, she adopted a young girl so stricken with leprosy that no one in the hospital dared to touch her. After she had done all she could to alleviate the poor child's suffering, she played games with her to make her forget her misery.

When Conrad learned of it, he was very angry. He removed the leper at once and imposed a severe penance on Elizabeth. But she was not easily discouraged or snubbed. The saints never are. That is part of the very courage which makes them saints. She replaced her patient by a little child suffering from a complaint almost as revolting as leprosy. This child she kept with her until her death. Nevertheless, lepers with her as with our Seraphic Father Francis and other heroes of the Order, were always favorites. One of the first victories St. Francis won over his own sensitive, pleasure-loving nature was associated

with this dread disease. We recall how, as he was riding along one momentous day he met a man frightfully disfigured with leprosy; and fighting his first instinct to turn aside his horse's head to avoid the disgusting sight, he suddenly stopped, leaped from his horse and kissed the wounds of the amazed man. At that moment a flood of divine love poured into Francis' soul and he saw life as he had never seen it before. St. Clare, too, had a great devotion to these unfortunate souls, and that other royal patron of the Third Order, St. Louis of France, treated them as his own brothers. St. Elizabeth was therefore but following in the footsteps of many saints. We can never hope to understand or appreciate their attitude toward these outcasts until we put ourselves in their places, back in the environment of the Middle Ages.

To begin with, leprosy was regarded as something sacred. It was looked upon as the gift of God—a special mark of divine attention. The Hand of the merciful Father had stricken His child in a mysterious manner, and to heal him by human science was impossible. Jesus Christ Himself was to their devout imagination figured in the despised lepers. It was in the house of a leper that He suffered Mary Magdalene to anoint His feet, and it was the

leper Lazarus that He chose to raise from the dead. Then, too, it was by pilgrims and Crusaders to the Holy Land that leprosy was brought into Europe. It was holy in its origin.

Solitude, reflection and retreat with God became necessary for a leper. Think what an epidemic of small pox or influenza means to us today. Then imagine the terrible danger of contagion in those days before medical science existed. In places where there were no leper hospitals, special arrangements were made to separate these stricken ones. So solemn was such an event that the Church was inspired to write a special liturgical ceremonial for it. First the Mass of the Dead was celebrated. All the articles the leper was to use in the future were blessed. Everyone present gave an alms. All formed in procession, and headed by the Crossbearer and the clergy they led the stricken one to the solitary hut assigned him. At Easter only were the lepers allowed to leave their tombs and enter the towns. On that great day they were permitted to share in the universal joy of Christendom, but even then they must ring their bell as they walked along to warn people of their approach. When celebrating their funeral the Church used the Office of a "Confessor-Not-a-Bishop" in place of the usual requiem mass.

Thus we see lepers were looked upon with veneration mingled with fear. It was only saints and great souls who were able to vanquish this latter feeling. Persons such as Elizabeth learned to despise all human precautions as if there were no contagion at all. Nor do we read that they caught the disease. Rather there are many miracles recorded where the lepers they ministered to were instantly healed by the great power of their prayers.

3

A duchess living with lepers! A princess who denied herself the least title of royalty! A wealthy widow living like a pauper! Is it any wonder that the rumour spread about that Elizabeth was mad? By the time this report reached Hungary it had become much exaggerated. King Andrew was terribly alarmed. The old man had supposed that his daughter was safe in the Castle of the Wartburg. There was nothing to do but to have Elizabeth brought back to Hungary where he could see to it that she was treated with the respect proper to her rank. Accordingly he dispatched an old and trusted friend and nobleman, a count, as the ambassador for this mission to his royal daughter.

He went first to Eisenach and boldly de-

manded of the Landgrave Henry the reason for the extraordinary position in which the Duchess Elizabeth was placed. Henry tersely replied: "My sister has become quite mad. Everyone knows it. You will see it yourself."

Next the Count interviewed the innkeeper at Marburg. "What think you," he said, "of the Lady named Elizabeth who has come to this country from Hungary? Why does she live thus in misery, or can there be any charge against her honour?"

"She is a most pious lady and right virtuous," replied the innkeeper. "She is as rich as she can wish to be, for this city and the neighbouring villages are her sole property. If she wished she could have chosen a husband from among many princes. But in her great humility she lives thus in misery for she despises all the world's wealth. God has conferred a great favor on us by sending this lady to us. It is profitable to the salvation of all even to come in contact with her. She never wearies in her works of charity. She is most chaste, most gentle, most merciful, but beyond all she is the most humble woman in all the world. Come with me and I will take you to see her."

With the innkeeper as guide, the Count made his way to Elizabeth's little house. What

should greet his eyes but his royal master's daughter spinning with her own work-roughened hands! Elizabeth must have enjoyed the little comedy that followed. The dignified old Count was so affected, we are told, that he burst into tears. Making the sign of the cross he cried out in holy horror; "Did anyone ever before see a king's daughter spinning wool?"

When the old gentleman had sufficiently regained his composure, he seated himself by Elizabeth's side and told her of his errand. He repeated the wild tales that had reached King Andrew. He informed her that he had been sent to take her back to her old home. From now on she would be held in honour. This was to be the end of her humiliations and labours. There is almost a trace of scorn in Elizabeth's reply. No one but the infinitely rich Son of the King of Heaven had reduced her to this state of life, and He by no other force than His own most sweet example. Moreover, she had no reason to complain; there was nothing she wanted, and she assured the Count that she was perfectly happy.

As a last resort he reminded her of the disappointment and sorrow she was causing her aged father. This was the one weak spot in Elizabeth's heart and he knew it, and it is always the sort of argument used by the world

to keep the aspirant after holiness fast bound in the chains of worldliness. What he did not know was that in the spiritual life it is possible for souls to be bound closer by ties of prayer than by even the ordinary ties which love and propinquity make.

Elizabeth paused long enough to look at her crucifix. Then she answered him. "Say to my dearest lord and father that I am more happy in this contemptible life than he is in his regal pomp, and that far from sorrowing over me he ought to rejoice that he has a child in the service of the King of Heaven. All that I ask of him is to pray and to have prayers offered for me, and I will ceaselessly pray for him as long as life is left me."

So the Count gave her up as hopeless and took his leave and Elizabeth went merrily on with her spinning.

4

In the case of certain pious people, penances and mortifications are apt to be more the gratification of self-will than the mark of sanctity. This was not so with Elizabeth. The least detail of her life was governed by obedience. She had given her will to another in her vow to God. We may not have a very high opinion of Master Conrad's ability to direct souls. Our own temper is sorely tried

when we read of the angry blows he so often dealt out to his gentle penitent. Yet he was the priest to whom God had given the charge of Elizabeth's soul. And he did have a vision of perfection for her, and by this he ever strove with rigour and harshness to mould her.

Undoubtedly Elizabeth's only earthly consolations at this period of her life had their root in the exercise of works of mercy. Master Conrad began by attacking her weakness in this very point. As an antidote to her boundless generosity, he placed a cruel restriction on her. She was not to give any poor person more than one penny at one time in alms. Just as the Hands of Jesus, so often raised to bless and heal, were fastened helplessly to the cross, so by obedience the religious is often rendered helpless. But obedience is better than sacrifice, and it accomplishes more for God in the end than any self-chosen activity.

Holy as Elizabeth was, she was not able to obey this hard measure perfectly at once. Here is a little encouragement for us. She tried to evade the decree without being actually disobedient. First she increased the value of her pence by having them coined of silver instead of copper, until this too was forbidden.

Now anyone who has gotten much for a little asking, will not be satisfied when the next time

he is given only a little. People were as greedy in the thirteenth century as now. They complained at this sudden stinginess. Elizabeth overlooked this ugly trait in them. She was thinking only of their great need. Soon she had another trick ready. In this she reminds us of that other Franciscan, the over-generous Brother Giles, who when forbidden to bestow his cloak as an alms, told his beggar that he could not give it but would not mind who helped himself to it, and then gleefully reported to his superior that an honest man had taken it.

"I am forbidden to give you more than one penny at one time," she said, "but that does not hinder me from giving one each time you come."

The peasants were not slow in taking the hint. They walked around the hospital and returned for their next penny.

Master Conrad had no sense of humour. In fact he gave way to anger when tales of Elizabeth's pious stratagems were reported to him. He took away from her the privilege of giving away money in any form. He did allow her to distribute bread. Gradually he reduced the quantity from loaves to slices, and finally he made her stop all almsgiving in any form at all.

There was no way left for her to exercise her charity save in nursing. Even here she was forbidden to have any relations with her favorites, the lepers. She remembered her wholehearted dedication on Good Friday. These obediences were hard but they were the only means of paying God what she had promised Him. With His help she learned how to obey without a murmur. Soon she became well skilled in this supreme science. On one occasion Master Conrad specially requested Elizabeth to attend a sermon he was to preach. Perhaps she had an extra sick call. At any rate, she let the time slip by and forgot about the sermon. His preaching over, Master Conrad sent for her and demanded the reason for her absence. Without giving her time to answer he struck her rudely in the face. "Take that to remind you to come next time I send for you." As Elizabeth was about to excuse herself, he struck her again and this time so severely that blood flowed. Someone afterward asked her how she was able to bear such blows.

"For having endured them patiently," she replied, "God permitted me to see Christ in the midst of His angels, for the Master's blows elevated me to the second heaven."

When these words were reported to Master Conrad he cried out, "Then I will forever re-

gret I did not transport her to the ninth heaven."

Conrad's methods were harsh, but his blows were not always given in anger. This was the only way he knew of making Elizabeth into a saint. That a tender, frail, high-strung and high-born woman could endure these undeserved punishments so sweetly and so humbly ought to make us love her all the more. And it ought to make us strive to accept in a sweeter spirit the little taps the world gives us.

Next comes the hardest sacrifice of all. Up to this time, Elizabeth had found consolation and sympathy in the companionship of her faithful maidens. Ever since her childhood, she had shared all her desires and heartaches with the two favorites, Guta and Isentrude. Now Master Conrad took it upon himself to break this one last tie which bound Elizabeth to her past life. One by one, he sent all her friends away. Each time, her grief was renewed afresh.

When the last one had gone she found she was to be denied even the comfort of solitude. Conrad replaced her maidens by two ugly, old women, one of them vulgar and rude, the other deaf and ever-angry. These two servants gave Elizabeth many trials. Knowing her zeal for mortification, they made it an excuse to give

her to do their most fatiguing tasks. She had never learned to cook, and they blamed her bitterly when she let the food burn. They taunted her that she did not even know how to make soup. They spied upon her to find some flaw to point out to Master Conrad. Such companions would have made a great saint or a devil out of anybody. Because Elizabeth accepted their presence in the right spirit, she found innumerable opportunities for increasing her charity and patience, and grew steadily in holiness and happiness.

So completely was Elizabeth under the power of Master Conrad that it would have been strange had she not feared him. But this fear did not make her weak or break her spirit. Neither was she ashamed of it. She used to say to her maidens, "If I so much fear a mortal man, how much more shall I tremble before God Who is Lord and Judge of all mankind." It is the fear of men that makes us cowards. It is the fear of God that makes us brave. It was not of Master Conrad's blows that she, a princess of royal blood, was afraid; her fear of him was rather that holy fear which rested on an entirely spiritual basis. She looked upon him as a priest, and, since she had vowed to obey him, as the representative of God. That kind of fear is a splendid thing.

5

Let us not forget the happy result of her self-denials. By means of these her human will became perfectly conformed to the Divine Will. God's wishes and Elizabeth's were one. What else is this but the union with God, which theologians tell us is the chief end of man? Because Elizabeth willed only and always to do God's will, He willed to do hers in return, even when she had forgotten she willed it. Our Lord will never let anyone vanquish Him in love. And this is the explanation of the marvellous efficacy of Elizabeth's prayers. From now on in her story we will see the sick and unhappy begging her not so much for her sympathy and charity as for her intercessions. So near had she come to the Heart of our Lord that a prayer of hers often sufficed to drive away sufferings which before she could but strive to soothe. On one occasion speech was instantly restored to a little deaf and dumb boy at her powerful pleadings. Another day it was a blind man who was given his sight and again a paralytic who was healed. The heart of a vain and worldly-minded lad was completely changed and a vocation to the Friars Minor given him when his mother begged Elizabeth to intercede for him. And so on and on we could go, if there were but time,

without coming to the end of these wonderful tales. Some people have called God's gracious answers to the prayers of his saints "miracles," and find them a stumbling block of faith. But even miracles become simple and easy to understand when we look at them from this point of view.

Intercession is one of the most beautiful phases of the prayer life. But prayer does not end in asking for things. There must also be confession, and contrition for sins, and thanksgiving to God for His innumerable blessings to us, and acts of reparation for the shameful treatment He receives at the hands of His creatures. Then there is adoration, the highest form of prayer possible, the praising of God because He is what He is.

All these must enter into a balanced prayer. The highest compliment Master Conrad ever paid Elizabeth related to her wondrous skill in praying. "Before God," he said, "I declare that I have never seen a more contemplative woman." Let us see why it was Elizabeth deserved this tribute.

Her one rule of prayer was a simple one. "I know not how to ask anything of God but that His will be done in all things."

One would think that her works of mercy would have sufficed to fill all her time. Yet

notwithstanding all these she devoted many hours each day to meditation and prayer. As we have seen, the place of first importance she gave to Holy Mass and the Divine Office, the official prayers of the Church. She was accustomed to make frequent visits to the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the various churches of Marburg. Sometimes if she did not feel sufficiently alone and unobserved there—churches were more popular then than now—she would go out in the open fields. There she would join with the birds and trees and dumb beasts in their offering of their never-ceasing praises to their Creator.

To love nature is inevitable to one who has a Franciscan vocation. There is a quaint tradition that nature in return had a special care for Elizabeth, and that when it rained all about her she alone was not wet.

Elizabeth never failed to spend a part at least of each night in prayer. God's image was too deeply engraved on her heart for her ever to forget Him. She was one day visiting a wealthy monastery. The monks led her to their chapel with a great deal of enthusiasm, to show her some new carvings richly gilded.

"Indeed," she told them, "it would have been better to keep the money that these cost to give in alms for food and clothing, for the

subjects here represented should be carved on your hearts."

Occasionally Elizabeth experienced moments of discouragement and darkness. This is not strange. It is human to be sometimes depressed, and she was very human. Then, too, our Lord employs this mystical discipline when He trains a soul in the interior life. No trial could disturb Elizabeth's sweetness. On the contrary, she appeared even gayer in her sorrows because, as St. Clare said, she knew she was then nearer to God.

As Elizabeth neared the end of her life on earth, her prayers frequently became transformed into ecstasies. Although she tried to conceal the wonderful favours she received, those who lived with her could not fail to notice them. After these glimpses of celestial things her face shone with such a reflection of the divine splendour that no one in mortal sin could look at her without being dazzled. Angels from heaven were at various times sent to instruct her, and sometimes the Queen of Angels herself. Later our Lord accompanied by a multitude of saints appeared to her to console and strengthen her. Such flights of contemplation are far too high for us to realize, much less to pass judgment on. We can only prostrate ourselves in wondering awe before

such holiness and thank God for this chosen soul.

6

One night while Elizabeth was praying, Christ appeared to her and announced that her trial in the world had been long enough, and that soon He would conduct her to the place He had prepared for her from all eternity. From now on how eagerly she must have seized each moment to prepare for this last great journey to her Beloved One.

About the same time Master Conrad was taken very ill. He sent for his gentle penitent. "What will become of you, my lady and dear child, when I am dead? Who will be your protector against the wicked and lead you to God?"

"Your question is a vain one, Reverend Father, for I will die before you; believe me, I shall not have need of another protector." And she told him of the vision.

True enough, four days later she was attacked by the illness which was to be her last. For twelve or fourteen days she lay the victim of a burning fever, yet always joyous and happy and continually in prayer.

When Master Conrad asked her what her last will regarding her property was she replied, "I am astonished that you should put

such a question to me, for you know that I renounced all my property. I retained no more than was necessary to pay debts and give alms. If you had granted permission I would have gladly given up all and lived by begging. All of this of which I was apparently mistress has belonged in reality to the poor. Distribute among them whatever I leave except this old robe in which I wish to be buried. I make no will; I have no heir but Jesus Christ."

To one of her companions who begged her for some remembrance, she added, "I will leave thee the mantle of our blessed Father Francis. Heed not that it is patched, torn and miserable, for it was the most precious treasure I ever possessed. I declare to thee that whenever I asked any special favor from God, and prayed covered with this cloak, He always granted my wishes with infinite mercy."

After Elizabeth had partaken for the last time of the Bread of Life, she remained all day motionless and silent, absorbed in contemplation. Toward the vesper hour she burst into a torrent of fervent aspirations. Those present declared that all she had ever read or learned, in her ecstasies, came to her mind to be imparted to her maidens at her death. She recited whole passages of Scripture from memory.

At cock-crow her face became radiant. "At this hour did the Virgin Mary bring to the world its Saviour. Let us speak of God and of the infant Jesus, for it is now midnight, the hour in which Jesus was born and in which He created a new star that had never before been seen; at this hour He came to redeem the world; He will redeem me also; at this hour He arose from the dead and delivered the imprisoned souls; He will also deliver mine from this miserable world."

Her joy and happiness increased visibly every moment. At length she cried eagerly, "the moment has arrived when God summons His friend to the wedding feast. The Bridegroom seeks His spouse."

Then in a low tone she added "Silence! Silence!" And with these words Christ received this precious soul unto Himself.

Ever since the year of her death, 1231, the Church has celebrated this day, the nineteenth of November, in honour of St. Elizabeth, bidding us remember that it was not so much her death day as her entrance into eternal glory.

An old manuscript tells us that the little, four-year-old Gertrude who was then at Altenburg, said to her companions, "I hear the passing bell at Marburg. At this moment the dear lady, my mother, is dead."

X

ELIZABETH, THE COMPANION OF THE HEAVENLY CITIZENS

Lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. Arise my love, my fair one, and come away. Cant. 2, 11, 13.

1

MAY the King of Eternal Glory bring us to the society of the heavenly citizens! This prayer was often on the lips of Elizabeth, as it is still on the lips of all who say the Canonical Hours. At the Night Office when darkness hems us in and reminds us of death while the radiance of the candles about the altar speaks of the glory of the redeemed in heaven, what religious as he hears this ancient blessing given at the third nocturn can help but wonder how the prayer will be answered for us and whether we at last will be in outer darkness or in eternal light.

Right dear in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. Their death-day becomes their heavenly birth-day, and their sorrows and penances yield to bliss of the beatific vision. On this day God crowns them, and often He

honours them by giving a hint to those left behind of what is to be done to one "whom the King delighteth to honour." We know that the sorrow of bereavement is often sweetened by the dignity and restfulness which seems reflected in the countenance of the departed. In the lives of many saints we see a further manifestation of this same phenomena. Frequently the bodies of the saints have remained incorruptible, as in the case of St. Clare whose sacred remains are still viewed by thousands of pilgrims every year. Elizabeth's face in death is said to have been enchantingly beautiful, her youthful beauty reappearing with all its brilliancy and freshness. Her face became calm and majestic, her flesh flexible to the touch as if she were still alive. This tradition has been depicted faithfully by the unknown artist who sculptured the main events in her life upon the altars of the great church erected as her shrine at Marburg, and as we have already hinted, his representation of her in the sweet sleep of death is far more lovely than his other representations of her. It was also said that her body gave forth a wonderful fragrance, a type of the grace and virtue which filled her soul, according to the sense of the antiphon in the Office of Virgins which we might paraphrase in the words: "While King

Jesu sitteth at His Altar-Table and feedeth my soul with grace, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof." And Elizabeth, the Franciscan, we are told, like our Seraphic Father himself, was beloved of the birds and they came to sing her dirge, even as they had come to sing his, in sweeter tones than that of any human choir. On the eve of her burial several people who had journeyed to Marburg to be present at the requiem heard the faint sounds of an exquisite melody. They went to investigate its source. There on the roof of the church was a great flock of little birds of a kind that had never before been seen, and all of them were singing fit to burst their tiny throats. St. Bonaventure's comment on this is worth recording. "These little birds rendered testimony to her purity by speaking of her in their own language at her burial and in singing with such wondrous sweetness over her tomb. He who spake by the mouth of an ass to rebuke the folly of a prophet, could as well proclaim the innocence of a saint by the voice of birds."

Notice how these traditions of Elizabeth in her death all breathe the spirit of freshness, joy, youth and life. It is difficult to imagine where those carping critics, such as our doughty Father Kingsley, get their idea that Elizabeth was weak, haggard and like an old woman,

worn out by prodigious penances and dying of a broken heart. It may suit their prejudices to believe these things but there is much clear evidence to the direct contrary.

2

Elizabeth lived in dishonour but she died in glory. Those about her had misunderstood her and censured her. Some may have gone even so far as to slander her. But when she was dead they realized that she was a saint. The thirteenth century, in spite of its faults, was an age of great faith. When people were brought face to face with holiness they were not ashamed to respect it, for they saw in it the likeness of God. Accordingly, as the news spread concerning the holiness of Elizabeth, we find people from all over Germany flocking to Marburg to honour this woman, not for her royal lineage but because she was a great servant of God.

Shortly before she died Elizabeth begged those around her to treat her body in death as she had taught them to treat her in life, with no more attentions than they would pay to any poor widow woman. The worn and mended habit which had been her only garment in life was to be her death shroud. They were to bury her among the poor whom she served in

life, in the chapel of her St. Francis Hospital. She pleaded with Conrad not to allow any one to carry away pieces of her clothing or her hair as reliques. Elizabeth knew the people among whom she dwelt. She foresaw to what demonstrations their emotional natures might lead them. A few years and all the lessons of holiness and self-effacement which she had spent her life in illustrating would be forgotten in the magnificence of a great tomb or some silly monument to her name. A world preoccupied with material things, when its conscience is pricked by some great follower of Christ, bribes itself into forgetfulness of the spiritual lesson by paying tribute in the very coin against whose taint the lesson was pointed. You recall a similar happening in regard to St. Francis—the great basilica marking his burial place is the ironic and insulting tribute of a rich and luxurious world to the poverty to which his life was dedicated.

The demonstrations of piety, grief and veneration which our Saint had foreseen and from which her modesty and humility had shrunk, took place no sooner than her body had been removed to the chapel of the hospital. During the four days that the body lay in state there was a continual stream of watchers in the chapel. Great ladies and humble housewives,

noble lords and lowly beggars all knelt side by side and joined in offering up a ceaseless service of Psalm and prayer.

Perhaps the highest tribute they paid Elizabeth was an unconscious one, their universal grief over the loss of their benefactress. We can see them yet. Over in the corner is a little boy sobbing as if his heart would break. This good lady had been the only mother he had ever known. There stand two wretched peasant women finding a little comfort in recalling what holy Elizabeth had taught them about the joys of heaven. The friars too realize their great loss, for Elizabeth was the greatest inspiration they had ever had to spur them on in their lives of poverty and their apostolic labours. Peering in at that window is one of Elizabeth's favorite leper patients. He dares not come any nearer the people but at least he may strain to get a last glimpse. No one now will bathe and dress his wounds. No one perhaps even will care enough to speak a few words of comfort and encouragement. In a very conspicuous place are the Duchess-Mother Sophia and her Thuringian friends. They are quite at a loss to know what attitude to adopt at the funeral of this strangest member of their family. The time is coming when they will be very proud of her. The world will proclaim

her greatness and then they will feel safe in expressing admiration, but till the world makes up their minds for them it is most embarrassing. We may be only too sure the blind man is also here, but now no longer blind, you remember. Think how he must have glorified God as he looked on the face of her who had won the gift of sight for him! Truly right dear in the sight of both God and His faithful people is the death of His Saints.

3

Unlike human glory which ends at death, that of a saint begins at the tomb. From the day of her death Elizabeth's humble grave became a great shrine for pilgrimages. Men and women came to Marburg from all parts of Europe for the sole purpose of praying in a place hallowed by such holy memories. Blessed are those who seek for they shall find. Inevitably, great results followed in the form of answered prayers.

First it was a monk. For over forty years this man had been the victim of terrible interior trials which human science can never understand and which human remedies are powerless to heal, but which are common enough among those who live a life of extraordinary prayer. On the second day after Elizabeth's

funeral he came with a most firm faith to kneel at her tomb. Almost immediately the mystic sufferings disappeared and the longed-for peace was restored. This example is but a type of the innumerable cures that actually took place in Marburg.

During the rigorous examination that preceded St. Elizabeth's canonization all these reputed miracles were examined, their authenticity established and records made which are extant today. Among them occasional mention is made of notorious sinners who came to visit St. Elizabeth's tomb from evil motives, and then found themselves irresistibly drawn to make good resolutions which changed their whole future lives. There are even cases where dead persons were restored to life after St. Elizabeth's prayers had been invoked. Ordinarily it was physical sufferers, the lame, the blind, the paralytic, the idiot, the leper, those such as the dear St. Elizabeth had delighted to gather round her during her ministry on earth, who were the most frequent to avail themselves of her powerful aid. At first many of these came not knowing their benefactress was dead. Then God taught them a blessed truth. Though their dear one was really dead and could no longer minister to them, as she had done while on earth, yet she still loved them and prayed

for them; and how much more powerful were those prayers now that she could see God face to face! Moreover, it helped make plain the great truth that whatever is accomplished for good by any one, be he saint or sinner, is done only at God's desire and through His power.

To the true Catholic Christian, death is not a weird and horrible event but rather an interesting and beautiful experience in our eternal lifetime of friendship with God. To those who have faith death does not separate. It unites. It brings both the dead and the living nearer to God. Membership in the Church means membership in Christ and union with each other, for the Church is His Mystical Body. It is also the Kingdom of Heaven on earth in which we may live if we will. The Communion of the Saints of which the creed speaks is a reality. We need only believe it and act on the truth of it to make it so. In fact a Christian is under obligation to cultivate friendship with God's friends, the saints. If you can say to a fellow Christian "Pray for me" up to the very moment he breathes his last, why can you not continue to say it to him forever? There is now all the more reason than before that he should pray for you because he is nearer to God, and his prayers will be the more worth seeking because of that fact.

At any rate only those who practise "invocation of saints" ever come to a practical knowledge and understanding of the fellowship and brotherhood of Christianity and of the comfort which this union with Christ and with each other may afford us. As some one has said, "Which is the more Christian and more helpful idea, to consider a saint as a dead papist or as a living friend?"

Accounts of wonders, worked through the Dear Saint's intercession, spread rapidly throughout Germany and the Catholic world in general. Such miraculous cures were sufficient to expel the doubts of the most skeptical as to the genuineness of Elizabeth's sanctity. Popular devotion to her increased with the report of each new miracle. People boldly called her saint and clamoured that the Church officially bestow the title upon her. But Holy Church has ever been very careful in matters of this sort.

4

In the early days of Christianity, when some great hero of the Church died, there grew up around him a popular devotion which usually ended in his being given the title of Saint. This was canonization by popular acclamation. Later as the Church grew and spread over such vast stretches of territory, the primitive method

became insufficient to guard against unworthy persons being venerated in the same degree as were martyrs and confessors and the other heroes of God. Then it came about that saints were canonized by the solemn decree of the bishop. Even this did not satisfy the Church's desire for greater surety, and so she found it necessary to demand proofs of the virtues and miracles of any who were reputed to be saints, and living witnesses who could vouch for them. Consequently the process of canonization developed quite naturally into an elaborate and careful system.

There is at the present time a definite method of canonization both in the Orthodox Churches of the East and in the Roman Church. It has often been debated as to whether the English Church intended her addition to the Kalendar of the name of the martyred Charles Stuart to be a formal act of canonization or not. At any rate most Anglican religious communities still keep the thirtieth of January as the "Feast of Bd. Charles Stuart, King and Martyr," since his proper office and mass was not removed from the Prayer Book by the action of the Church but by mere royal authority. Apparently, if canonization is to take place among Anglicans today, it must be done by the primitive method which we have described as

"popular acclamation" or else by the decree of a bishop.

The prejudice which exists against everything "Roman Catholic" leads many people to assume that the process of canonization is an act whereby the Church "makes a saint" and imposes upon the credulity of her people another burden of superstitious worship. Of course only the grace of God can make a saint. The process of canonization is rather a very slow and painstaking inquiry as to whether the person in question was really the saint he or she is reputed to be. It is a means of guarding against superstitious worship. Unless there is definite and provable evidence of heroic sanctity, the Church refuses to permit any official act of reverence to be paid toward the person whose sanctity has been questioned.

There is so much misunderstanding of Catholic ideals that it may be well to raise and answer the question "what is a saint?" All Christians have a vocation both to salvation and perfection. We are called to be saints. "Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect." In other words, be as good as God! The meaning of all our temptations and spiritual struggles and of the elaborate machinery of faith, grace and worship, which we have in the Catholic Church, is just

this, that God is dealing through these things with each baptised person in such a way as to make him a saint.

Just because most of us die as we have lived, mere ordinary Christian sinners, we are not fit to go to heaven. If we die in a state of grace, that is, as God's friends rather than as His enemies, then there is for us in the Intermediate State a process of purgation, wherein the soul is cleansed and perfected by undergoing the discipline which we did not sufficiently accept or undergo in this world, so as to be able to reach perfection before death. When the process of purgation of the soul of the departed has been completed the soul is ready for heaven. It no longer remains with the holy souls in purgatory but becomes one of the holy saints in heaven. Who does not love to think, while in attendance at a requiem mass, that through the prayers of the faithful then being offered many of the holy souls are enabled to finish their purgation and to rise triumphantly to heaven and cast themselves down there in great joy before the throne of God?

To be a saint then is to reach a state of human perfection, to become as holy and wise and beautiful in the sight of God as one is capable of becoming. We cannot of course ever

reach the state of infinite perfection which belongs to God alone, but we will never get to heaven until we reach that state of human perfection which He wills for us.

So we see that when the Church says that a human soul has reached such a state of sanctity that it deserves in all justice the veneration of the faithful, she means that negatively such a soul is free from sin and that positively it has acquired all the Christian virtues and has practised some of them in a heroic degree.

The process of canonization in use in the Roman Church is very interesting. The usual procedure is really "a suit at law," says the Encyclopaedia Britannica, "pleaded before the tribunal of the Congregation of Rites, which is a permanent commission of cardinals assisted by a certain number of subordinate officers and presided over by a cardinal. The supreme judge in the matter is the Pope himself.

"The *postulator,* who is the mandatory of a diocese or ecclesiastical commonalty, is the solicitor. He must furnish the proofs, which are collected according to very stringent rules. The *promoter of the faith,* popularly called the 'devil's advocate' (advocatus diaboli) is the defendant, whose official duty is to point out to the tribunal the weak points of the case. . . .

The first decisive step is the introduction of the cause. If, by the advice of the cardinals who have examined the documents, the Pope pronounces his approval, the servant of God receives the title of 'Venerable,' but is not entitled to any manifestation of cultus.

"Only in the event of the claimant passing this test successfully can the essential part of the procedure be begun, which will result in conferring on the Venerable the title of 'Blessed.'

"This part consists in three distinct proceedings (1) to establish a reputation for sanctity, (2) to establish the heroic quality of the virtues, (3) to prove the working of miracles. A favourable judgment on all three of these tests is called beatification.....

"The process of canonization which follows that of beatification, is usually less lengthy. It consists principally in the discussion of the miracles (usually two in number) obtained by the intercession of the Blessed since the decree of beatification.

"After a great number of formalities and prayers, the Pope pronounces the sentence, and indicates eventually the day on which he will proceed to the ceremony of canonization, which takes place with great solemnity in the basilica of St. Peter."

5

So much care and prudence was taken at Elizabeth's canonization in collecting and proving the necessary records that five centuries later Pope Benedict XIV found it worthy of being cited as a model. To Master Conrad is to be given a large share of the credit due for completing Elizabeth's case in so short a time. How happy he must have been over the sanctity of this life for which he was so greatly responsible. Soon after her death he sent Gregory IX, the man who was at that time the head of Western Christendom, an account of the miracles worked at St. Elizabeth's tomb and of the veneration of the people for her. The aged Pope had lost none of his enthusiasm for the Franciscan Order. To him had already been given the happiness of adding the names of St. Francis and St. Anthony to the Kalendar of Saints, and now he gladly authorized the collection of testimonies in regard to Elizabeth. He appointed the Archbishop of Marburg, a certain abbot, and Master Conrad to undertake this important duty. Out of a vast number of miraculous cures they selected one hundred and twenty-nine as being perfectly attested. By the year 1233 the material was completely coordinated and ready to submit to the examiners in the process of canonization.

It was just at this point that Master Conrad was killed. In all justice it must be said that his death was a great blow to the cause of canonization and the event itself was considerably delayed thereby. The man raised up by God to take his place in pushing the cause was another Conrad, the brother-in-law of Elizabeth and the brother of the unworthy Henry. In the spring of 1235 he met the Pope at Perugia where seven years earlier Francis of Assisi had been declared a saint. There in the presence of a vast number of clergy the documents were officially opened and the greatest precautions exercised in examining them. Everything was done by the "devil's advocate" to disprove them, but so much severity only served to render the truth more brilliant and undeniable.

The ceremony itself took place at Perugia on the feast of Pentecost, 1235. As soon as the bull of canonization reached Germany the event was celebrated with all the wealth of mediaeval festivities. The following May was chosen for the triumphal translation of Elizabeth's body to a shrine in the new church built especially in her honor. If we may believe contemporary historians twelve hundred thousand Christians gathered in the little city of Marburg to witness the event. All nations and

tongues were represented. The whole royal family of Thuringia were there, Henry, Conrad, Sophia, and Elizabeth's four children. Frederick II, then in the height of his glory, suspended the occupations connected with the rule of his empire that he might be present to honour her who had rejected his hand to give herself to God. To him was given the privilege of being the first to descend to the vault and lift the stone. This done, all present perceived that an exquisite perfume exhaled from the body. Since Elizabeth had been buried without being embalmed, no one could account for this wonder. It was interpreted as symbolic of the incense of her prayers. Although her body had been in the ground nearly five years, neither was there any appearance of corruption. The Emperor reverently placed a gold crown on the head of the dear St. Elizabeth with these words: "Since in thy lifetime thou wouldst not be crowned as my Empress, I wish at least to crown thee today as an immortal queen in the Kingdom of God." He also left at her tomb a magnificent chalice of gold to be used at her altar.

During the next three centuries millions of Christians came to visit this tomb. The feast day in honor of St. Elizabeth was celebrated yearly throughout Europe with great rejoicing.

Convents, asylums, hospitals, churches, adopted her as their special patroness. She was beloved by all until the so-called Reformation.

6

No story of St. Elizabeth would be complete without some reference to the fate of her children. It is through their lives that we see most clearly the effect of Elizabeth's holiness on others. All four of them in their very different states of life mirrored back the same lofty ideals, nobility of character and joyous simplicity. They ever blessed the good Providence of God that had given them such a holy mother. They counted their descent from her more honorable than possessions or princely rank. As we have seen, they signed themselves in all official documents "Son" or "Daughter of St. Elizabeth" before they put any of their other titles.

Nowadays we hear much of parents fearing to sacrifice their children to God in holy religion. They are afraid they will be unhappy. They are afraid that some day they may tire of serving God. Why manufacture fears? After all it is usually the young man or woman in the world that needs to be worried about, not those bound fast to the Heart of God by their thrice holy vows. The case of Elizabeth

brings this thought home to us. You remember the two youngest daughters whom she dedicated to God. As we have seen they entered convents, one at Kitzingen, the other at Altenburg. Think for a moment of their holy and beautiful lives, of the many souls that were saved because of their prayers, of the young religious they trained, of the peace that was theirs in their old age. Gertrude in particular governed her community for forty-nine years. She has always borne the title Blessed, and her tomb is still to be seen in Altenburg.

The two older children shared a far different fate. They were given to the world, and the world treated them just as cruelly and unjustly as it had treated their mother. As soon as the lad Hermann reached the age of eighteen and was likely to become dangerous, he was poisoned by his villainous uncle, the same man who had driven his mother from the Wartburg. On his deathbed the boy begged to be buried by the side of his mother, but Henry denied him even this consolation. It was said that he feared that the Saint's prayers, which had been the means of so many great miracles, even of the raising of the dead, might restore her son to life just as the dead man who was cast into the prophet Elisha's grave was miraculously restored to life. At any rate Hermann

was buried near his father's tomb at Reinhartsbrunn.

The fourth child, Sophia, suffered all her life long from the injustice and treachery of men. Her story is one struggle after another to secure and maintain the rights of her son Henry I, surnamed the Infant. During his long minority she governed the independent State of Hesse with wisdom and courage, and she deserves to be reckoned among the world's great women sovereigns.

Elizabeth died when her eldest child was only six years old. Had she lived a little longer, over which of these two groups of children do you think she would have spent her hours of worry? Which do think would have caused her most heartaches? As she looked down from heaven which do you think gave her the greatest joy?

7

The reliques of St. Elizabeth have not had the happy fate of some of God's servants whose remains have been lovingly and reverently preserved and venerated. The very effort made to protect them in building her the beautiful shrine of which we have spoken was the means of their desecration. The wealth expended on it was too great a temptation. At the so-called Reformation a new religion gave

irreverent and rapacious men a religious sanction for gratifying their greed. Phillip of Hesse, a direct, lineal descendant of St. Elizabeth, having embraced the tenets of Protestantism, forced an alien worship on the beautiful church. He inaugurated it by bursting open the shrine of St. Elizabeth and dragging forth her sacred reliques with vulgar and unseemly speech and actions.

"Come hither, old grandame Lisette," he is said to have exclaimed as he threw her bones into a forage-bag and made ready to carry them off. Then he and his fellow robbers despoiled the church and her shrine of everything of value which they could carry away. This in particular included the crown and golden chalice offered at her grave by the Emperor who had wooed and lost her, Frederick II.

"Honour to whom honour is due." Such is the Scriptural command. It is unjust to withhold honour from God's friends, the saints, more unjust than to withhold honour from the great of this world. The latter at least make shift to look after their own glory.

Which, think you, is more pleasing to God? The man who lovingly honours a saint because he sees God in that saint, or a man who refuses such acts of honour because he thinks that there is not enough worship to go round and to

pay honour to both God and His friends? At any rate history shows that those persons are most parsimonious in their worship of God who are parsimonious in paying honour to His saints.

Strange are the ways of men! Thinking to honour God more they decided to honour His saints less. Yet history shows that there is no neglect of the worship of God in the Catholic Church even though there the saints are freely honoured. The worship of a saint is but an act of indirect worship towards God. To multiply any kind of Christian worship is to multiply the worship of God. To decrease any kind of Christian worship is to strike a blow at the worship of God Himself. It is among the spiritual descendants of these very men who, out of a misconceived justice to God, refused justice to His friends that the worship of God is languishing.

This Phillip of Hesse who despoiled his holy ancestress' shrine has a special interest for Americans. He founded that princely line of hereditary rulers of the Hessians which gave to England the mercenaries who fought for them at the American Revolution and who were so much hated by the Colonists that "Hessian" has become a synonym for everything ugly and brutal.

This same Phillip of Hesse, surnamed by his partisans "the Generous," was the person immortalized by the now famous dispensation signed by Luther, Melanchthon and other reformers, which authorized Phillip, for the good of his soul, to have two wives at one and the same time provided he kept the dispensation secret from simple folk who might take offence thereat. It was his custom to go to church with a wife on each arm and his large family of children sprung from both unions trailing after them.

It is a relief to turn from the sinful vagaries of these would-be reformers to the simple goodness of the maiden, wife and widow, St. Elizabeth. The Church has well called her Mother of Paupers and Patroness of the Poor, but these titles should not suggest to us that she was a mere organizer and distributor of poor relief. She gave generously as became a princess. St. Thomas Aquinas in his *Ethicus* says that "munificence" is the virtue of heroic almsgiving. But money, food, clothing and gifts of material things were not all she gave. As someone has said, these were "the least of her gifts; above these, like stars above a battlefield, were her constant example and kindly counsel that freshened faith, kindled hope, and made peace in troubled hearts."

8

Never was there a life more full of the extraordinary or of swift and dramatic turns. Born a princess, she died a pauper. As a child of four she was affianced to wed. At the youthful age of eight we find her already considerably advanced in prayer. At twelve she is cheerfully undergoing a petty but very thorough and cruel persecution for her religion. At fourteen she is a wife and at sixteen a mother. Though so young, in the absence of her husband she, this slip of a girl, governs and governs well the whole great principality of Thuringia. Then comes the awful famine with people dying on all sides like flies. The Duchess conceives her duty as ruler to be the salvation of her people, and the royal granaries and coffers are exhausted in their service, a fact never forgotten or forgiven by the luxurious and purse-proud nobility. At twenty she is a widow, broken-hearted over the ruin of her sweet and girlish romance. Suddenly then she is driven from her castle by nobles, who claim that she will ruin them, if she is permitted in any way to rule as she did during the awful years of famine. In poverty she now walks the streets of her capital city, an outcast from all her former friends and her wards of charity. She finds refuge with her relatives only

to come face to face with an urgent proposal from the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, the greatest secular prince in the world, to be his consort and Empress. With difficulty she manages to escape this new honour, and goes to meet the dead body of her husband when it is brought back to Thuringia. There over his coffin, his knights swear a mighty oath of fealty and of quick revenge on her wrongs. Then comes reinstatement in her rank, her palace and her revenues, only to be followed by the renunciation of them all, that she may be a penitent and religious. The last days of her life are full of "incredible docility, astounding patience, and insuperable humility. They were likewise filled with striking examples of virtue divinely rewarded, of bleak spiritual languors, and not a few instances of crushing doubts. Of Elizabeth's life in Marburg, much might be said, as much as has been written. The shadows were, indeed, profound. But the lights, the splendours!"

If we were to collect her fragant virtues in a few words we should mention her sweet docility and unstained virginity as a child; her ardent love and the exquisite purity of her romance and wedded life with Louis; her marvellous gifts of prayer and contemplation; her unconquerable cheerfulness and hope; her

magnificent charity and lovableness; her supreme faith in God and man; her Christ-like forgiveness toward everyone; her indomitable patience and humility; and above all her gentle, human tenderness, so that even in her greatest ecstasies and flights of holiness she seems so near us and like us, as do all the Franciscan saints, that we are never afraid of her. There was much of temptation, of struggles to subdue, of commonplace work and humdrum life, of plain ordinary commonsense virtues, all through her great career of sanctity. The most ordinary and commonplace person can find much of help and comfort in her example. Indeed the extraordinary existed only because she did the ordinary things of life extraordinarily well. We are told that this is the chief mark of a saint.

FINIS

¶*Praise God that now is happily ended this little book of the life of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, the Dear Saint of Holy Church.*

¶*May He pardon His handmaid aught that is written amiss herein.*

¶*May He guide the gentle reader to seek in these printed pages not vain amusement, nor mere information, nor cause for idle conversation and foolish discussion, but Himself Who is Truth and Life.*

¶*May He, Who brought all things out of nothing, make this little book redound to the glory of Jesus and the salvation of souls.*

JESUS

only, always, and in all things.

APPENDIX I

THE RULE OF LIFE OF THE THIRD ORDER

(As Observed in the American Congregation of Franciscans)

"In the world but not of the world."

In the name of God. Amen.

¶1. Members of the Third Order will refrain from excessive cost and elegance in their dress and toilet, and will observe, each according to his state of life, the rule of moderation.

¶2. They will refrain with the utmost caution from objectionable dances, moving-picture plays and stage-plays, and from all revelry.

¶3. They will be frugal in eating and drinking. And they will neither sit down to the table nor rise from it without devoutly and gratefully invoking God.

¶4. They will be careful to abstain from meat on each Friday of the year except Christmas Day, on the Ember and Rogation Days, on Wednesdays as well as Fridays during Lent, on all Vigils appointed, and on the Eve of the Feast of their Father Francis. Those will

merit great praise who, in addition to this, in accordance with the original Rule of the Tertiaries, either fast on Fridays or abstain from flesh meat on Wednesdays.

¶5. They will examine their consciences daily, confess their sins at least monthly, and will approach the Holy Table every week. They are to remember, however, that the ideal thing is to be present at mass daily. They will assist at mass (or celebrate mass) at least once a month for the American Congregation of Franciscans.

¶6. They will make a daily meditation. It will be sufficient, to fulfill this rule, to read a few verses of Holy Scripture, and pray over them, ending with the Anima Christi, or to say devoutly a part of the Rosary, carefully considering the Mystery while saying the Hail Marys, but those living under The Sacerdotal Rule are bound to spend at least fifteen minutes daily in meditation.

¶7. They will say daily, for their Office, the Psalms appointed in the Book of Common Prayer for the morning and evening of each day, or else recite the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary, unless they are prevented from offering their Office to God by something which they can in good conscience offer to Him

in the place of saying the Office. It is permissible, according to St. Francis' own rule, to substitute Our Fathers, etc., for the daily Office, therefore it is permissible for anyone to say twelve times the Our Father, the Hail Mary, and the Glory be in place of the Office. Tertiaries who are ecclesiastics will recite carefully every day the Divine Office in lieu of the foregoing.

¶8. They will, of their charity, practise the Christian duty of intercession. To this end they will say daily the Memorial for God's blessing upon the American Congregation of Franciscans, and will add to this an Our Father and Hail Mary for the ten intentions of the Order.

¶9. In their home life let them study to lead others by their example, to promote pious practices and all that is good. Let them not allow any books or papers from which any injury to virtue can be feared, to be brought into their houses or read by those under their care. In particular they must strive to be loyal to their Church, their parish and their priest, so that they may be an example therein to others.

¶10. To promote peace and proper preparation for death, let those who have property to

dispose of make their wills without unnecessary delay.

¶11. Let them painstakingly exercise kindness and charity among themselves and toward their neighbours; and whenever they can, let them strive to settle quarrels. Every day they should do at least one act of charity out of love for God, even though it be no more than to throw a crumb to a bird.

¶12. Let them never use an oath except in case of necessity. Let them never use indecent language nor utter vulgar jokes. Let them examine their consciences every night as to whether they have perchance done anything of the kind; if they have, let them do penance for the fault.

¶13. They will contribute daily by their prayers and interest and influence, and as often as they can by alms, to the support and upbuilding in the Kingdom of God of the American Congregation of Franciscans, of which they are members.

¶14. It is presupposed that all tertiaries will observe the six precepts of the Church; and that they will inform themselves about the life of St. Francis, and endeavour to acquire the Franciscan virtues of gentleness, courtesy, love of souls, spiritual poverty or detachment,

and the like; and that they will remember that they are truly a part of the Franciscan Order of the American Congregation. To the end that this sacred membership may not be forgotten, each tertiary will make a monthly report to the Reverend Father Director as to how the Rule has been kept, and will also perform any penance he assigns when the Rule has been broken.

APPENDIX II

A LIST OF AUTHORITIES GIVEN IN COUNT MONTALEMBERT'S LIFE OF ST. ELIZABETH

1. PRINTED BOOKS

a. BY WRITERS BEFORE THE REFORMATION

¶1. *Epistola magistri Conradi de Marburg ad Papam, de vita B. ELISABETH.*

¶2. *Libellus de dictis quatuor Ancillarum S. Elisabethae sive examen miraculorum et vitae ejus.*

¶3. *Haec est forma de statu mortis Lantgraviae de Thuringiâ, ex MS. Liesbornensi, apud Martene et Durand, Collectio amplissima &c. Pars I.*

¶4. *S. Bonaventurae sermo de sancta Elisabeth.*

¶5. *Theodorici Turingi, ordinis praedicatorum, libri octo de S. Elisabeth, Andreae regis Hungarorum filia.*

¶6. *De sancta Helisabeth*—a legend from the famous collection entitled: *Aurea legenda*

sanctorum quae lombardica hystoria nominatur, compilata per fratrum Jacobum de Voragine.

¶7. *Auctor Rhytmicus de vita S. Elisabethae Landgraviae Thuringiae e codice bibl. Ducalis Saxo Gothan.*

¶8. *Monachi Isenacensis vulgo Johannis Rothe, Chronicon Thuringiae vernaculum.*

¶9. *Legende von Sant Elsebeten*—in the great legend called Passional.

¶10. *Sermo de S. Elisabeth,* in the *Thesaurus novus de Sanctis.*

¶11. *Vita illustris ac divae Elisabeth, regis Hungarorum filiae conscripta stilo elegantissimo opere Christi Sacerdotis Jacobi Montani Spirensis*—inserted in the large edition of Surius, entitled, *De Probatis Sanctorum historiis.*

¶12. *Annales de Hainaut, par Jean Lefevre*—published also after the *Histoire de Hainaut, par Jacques de Guyse.*

We omit the names of several authors, such as Vincent de Bauvais, etc., who have only spoken in a cursory manner of St. Elizabeth in their works.

b. BY CATHOLIC WRITERS AFTER THE REFORMATION

¶13. *Antonii Bonfinii Rerum Ungaricum decade quatuor cum dimidio 1581.*

¶14. *Annales minorum seu trium ordinum a S. Francisco institutorum a R. P. Luca Wadding hiberno.* Rome 1732.

¶15. *Justus Lipsius, Diva Virgo Hallensis, opera,* Tome II, page 808.

¶16. *Bavaria sancta, descripta a Matthaeo Radero, de Soc. Jesu.* Munich, 1615.

¶17. *La vie de S. Elisabeth, fille du Roi de Hongrie, Duchesse de Thuringe, première religieuse du tiers ordre de St. François, recueillie par le R.P. Apollinaire, revue, corrigée, et augmentée, par le R.P. Jean Marie, du même ordre. Paris, 1660.*

¶18. *La Vie de S. Elisabeth, &c., par le P. Archange, religieux pénitent du troisième ordre de St. François. Paris, 1692.*

¶19. *Auserlesenes history* [*sic*] *Buch. von den lieben Gottes heiligen, &c. by P. Martin de Kochem, Capuchin.* Augsburg, 1732.

¶20. *Histoire des Ordres Monastiques, le P. Helyot. Paris, 1718.*

¶21. *Die Legende der H. Elisabeth, von Johann, Graf Mailath, 1822.*

c. BY PROTESTANT WRITERS

¶22. *Adami Ursini, Molybergensis Chronicon Thuringiae vernaculum, apud Menckenii Script. Rer. Sax. 1547.*

¶23. *Diva Elisabetha magnifice coronata; Christiliche Ehrengedaechtniss der H. Elisabeth, in zwei Predigten, von J. B. Happel,* Lutheran Minister of the Teutonic Order. 1645.

¶24. Georg Michel Pfefferkorn: *Auserlesene Geschichte von der berühmten Landgrafschaft Thüringen, 1684.*

¶25. J. J. Winkelman: *Beschreibung der Fürstenthümer,* Hessen, &c. Bremen, 1698.

¶26. *Chr. Fron. Paullini historia Eisenacensis, &c.* Frankfort, 1698.

¶27. *Andreas Toppius: Historia der Stadt Eisenach, verfasset, 1660.*

¶28. *Joh. Mich. Koch: Historische Erzählung von dem Schloss Wartburg ob Eisenach, 1710.*

¶29. *Das im Jahr, 1708, lebende und schwebende Eisenach, von Johann Limperg, 1709.*

¶130. *Bina Sanctarum Elisabetharum*—(her of Schaengen, who died in 1056, and ours,)—*veluti illustrissimarum Soec. XI and XIII, testium veritatis evangelicae in Hassia, memoria monumentis et nummis declarata, à J. A. Liebknecht, 1729.*

¶131. *J. H. Von Falckenstein, Thüringische Chronik, 2 v., Erfurt, 1738.*

¶132. *J. G. A. Galletti, Geschichte Thüringens, Gotha, 1783.*

¶133. *Thüringische geschichte aus Sagittarius hinterlassenen Papieren, &c. 1787.*

¶134. *Elisabeth die heilige, Landgraefin von Thüringen und Hessen, &c. von Dr. Karl Wilhelm Justi, 1797. 1835.*

¶135. J. C. S. Thon: *Schloss Wartburg, Eisenach, 1826.*

¶136. *Histoire Généalogique de la Maison de Hesse.* By Baron Turkheim. Strassburg, 1819.

¶137. *Geschichte von Hessen, von Christophe Rommel, 1820.*

¶138. *Geschichte der Hohenstaufen, und ihrer Zeit. By Frederic de Raumer.*

2. MANUSCRIPTS

¶1. *Das Leben des edeln tuginthaftin lantgraven Ludewigis... de was elich gemahel unde wert der heiligen hochgebornen Frouwin Elysabeth.* (Life of the noble and virtuous Landgrave Louis, husband and liege lord of the holy and most noble lady Elizabeth), written by the Sire Berthold, his chaplain. Library at Gotha, another at Cassel.

¶2. *Vita S. Elisabethae Landgraviae a fratre Caesario, sacerdoti in monasterio vallis S. Petri,* better known as Caesar of Heisterbach, 1237.

¶3. *Der lieben, frowen sant Elysabeten de landgrefin leben.*

¶4. *Cy en commence la vie de Ste. Elysabel fille au roy de Hongrie. Rutebeuf MS. 7633. Bibli. Nationale, Paris.*

¶5. *Chi commenche de Ste. Yzabiel. Le moine Robert MS. 13th. century Bib. Nationale, Paris No. 1862.*

¶6. *Sente Elsebet Leben.* Darmstadt.

¶7. *Von Sente Elysabethen.* Strassburg.

¶8. *Von Sente Elsebethen.* Heidelberg. 13—.

¶9. *Vita S. Elysbethae Hungariae Reginae.* Florence.

¶10. *Legende der H. Elisabet und S. Gertraud ir mutter.*

¶11. *Historia ecclesiastica Isenacensis per monach. Nicholaum Rebhahn, 1621.* Eisenach.

¶12. *Joh. Whil. Waldschmidt. Commentatio succincta de vita et fatis M. Conradi de Marburg, Confessoris divae Elisabethae.* Cassel Library.

¶13. *Leben Mag. Conradi Von Marburg. J. N. Schminkius Bibli. de Cassel.*

¶And thirteen other documents in Manuscript collected by the Bollandists, and now in the Burgundian Library, Brussels.

N. B. This bibliography is an excerpt from the second American edition of Montalembert's "The Life of St. Elizabeth," published by Kenedy & Sons. The original of the list here printed abounds in typographical errors which the writer of this book has endeavoured to have corrected to some extent.